The National Institute of Parasitic Diseases (NIPD) of the Chinese Centre for Diseases Control and Prevention in Shanghai, China was renamed as the WHO Collaborating Centre for Tropical Diseases on 17 October 2015. NIPD has an influential track record of publishing cutting-edge science about parasite biology, epidemiology, and immunology for more than 60 years. Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director General, was in Shanghai to attend the inauguration of the centre, along with many personalities including Dr. Ma Xiaowei, Deputy Director of National Health and Family Planning Commission and Ms. WengTiehui, Vice Mayor of Shanghai.
Western Pacific Region Neglected Tropical Diseases

NEWS FROM MEMBER STATES

Brunei Darussalam

The Ministry of Health completed the third round of mass drug administration (MDA) against lymphatic filariasis for all eight subdistricts between October and November 2015, followed by coverage surveys in January 2016. The sentinel site surveys are being planned for early 2016 to assess whether the areas are eligible for a transmission assessment survey. Brunei Darussalam conducted the mapping survey in all four districts in 2006, which showed less than 1% microfilaraemia prevalence and less than 2% antigenaemia prevalence in all districts. However, the Regional Programme Review Group in 2011 recommended implementation of two rounds of MDA in the four subdistricts where microfilaraemia prevalence was above 1% and four other adjoining subdistricts in three districts. The Ministry of Health had decided to implement the third round of MDA in 2015 as a precautionary measure.

Cambodia

The national training workshop on the revised national deworming guidelines against soil-transmitted helminthiasis was conducted in July 2015. The training was attended by personnel from the Ministry of Health and related collaborating ministries, including the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, representing national, provincial, district and commune levels. It aimed to disseminate the information on the extended target populations for soil-transmitted helminthiasis deworming in Cambodia to the women of childbearing age working at plantations and to students from kindergarten up to high school.

The Ministry of Health conducted deworming campaigns for soil-transmitted helminthiasis in plantations during July and December 2015 jointly with Population Services Khmer and PSI/Cambodia.

The national stakeholders’ meeting on control and elimination of neglected tropical diseases was organized on 15 July 2015 in Phnom Penh. Those participating included high-level officials from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; representatives of the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training; and representatives from partners such as WHO, the United States Agency for International Development, FHI 360 and German Development Cooperation (GIIZ).

The dossier for validation of elimination of lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem was developed with support from RTI and WHO and finalized by the Ministry of Health. The dossier was submitted to WHO on 7 December 2015 for official review and validation.

Provincial trainings on the diagnosis of intestinal helminthiasis using the Kato-Katz technique for laboratory technicians working at health centres and referral hospitals in four provinces were conducted with the support of WHO in August 2015 (Kampot and Takeo provinces) and in December 2015 (Kratie and Stung Treng provinces).

The Cambodia Ministry of Health was part of a joint mission during 10 to 12 November 2015 to visit the schistosomiasis-endemic villages in Champasak province, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, where an intervention on water, sanitation and health (WASH) had also been initiated. The mission included representatives from the ministries responsible for neglected tropical diseases, water supply and sanitation, and animal health in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Cambodia, technical focal points on neglected tropical diseases, WASH and nutrition experts at the Regional Office for the Western Pacific and WHO country offices, and the schistosomiasis focal point at WHO headquarters. The participants jointly assessed the feasibility of integrating WASH interventions with preventive chemotherapy interventions and determining the additional complementary measures to further accelerate elimination of schistosomiasis in the two countries. The participants initiated development of the joint work plan for community-led multisectoral interventions to this end, and agreed on the way forward.
The Ministry of Health conducted an evaluation of measures to control and eliminate parasitic diseases under the national 12th Five-Year Plan. It acknowledged significant achievements made in the past five years through optimization of interventions and sustained political commitment, and initiated formulation of the national work plan for elimination of schistosomiasis and control of echinococcosis and other key parasitic diseases, 2016–2020.

The National Institute of Parasitic Diseases of the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention was renamed as the WHO Collaborating Centre for Tropical Diseases on 17 October 2015. The event was attended by Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO.

Cook Islands

The dossier for validation of elimination of lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem was developed with support from RTI and WHO and finalized by the Ministry of Health. The dossier was submitted to WHO on 7 December 2015 for official review and validation.

Fiji

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services completed the 12th round of MDA in Eastern Division and Taveuni subdivision in October 2015. Implementation of a survey of sentinel and spot check sites to determine their eligibility for a transmission assessment survey are planned in 2016. All the other areas in the country are under post-MDA surveillance.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services initiated the hydrocelectomy project with the support of the Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases and WHO, targeting operation on over 120 patients by local surgeons. The project is expected to be completed in early 2016.

French Polynesia

The Ministry of Health continued preparations for implementation of a survey of sentinel and spot check sites in Austral Islands, Tuamotu and Gambier Islands, and rural areas of Tahiti Nui and Tahiti Iti to determine their eligibility for a transmission assessment survey in early 2016. The last MDA round was implemented in April 2015.

Kiribati

The Ministry of Health received Mr Yohei Sasakawa, the WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination, who visited Kiribati in October 2015 to support advocacy and political commitment towards elimination of leprosy.

The Ministry of Health organized the hydrocelectomy project to clear the surgical backlog with the assistance of an external surgeon contracted with WHO support. The project was supported by the Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases. Four of the seven patients who were reported to be the remaining cases with hydroceles were diagnosed as having hernias. Two of the three cases diagnosed as hydroceles were operated upon, whereas one was excluded from operation due to other health issues.
Lao People’s Democratic Republic
The Ministry of Health conducted stool examinations for schistosomiasis at sentinel and spot check sites before MDA in November 2015. Stool samples were collected from both school-aged children and adults. The mean prevalence of infection was 0.06% (one positive out of 1630 individuals tested in all sentinel and spot check sites).

A joint mission to visit the schistosomiasis-endemic villages in Champasak province, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, was conducted during 10 to 12 November 2015 (for details see under Cambodia, above).

The Ministry of Health continued preparations for the fifth round of MDA against lymphatic filariasis covering the endemic province, planned in January 2016. Implementation of a survey of sentinel and spot check sites to determine their eligibility for a transmission assessment survey is planned for the fourth quarter of 2016.

Malaysia
The Ministry of Health conducted the second transmission assessment survey for lymphatic filariasis in five states in Peninsular Malaysia (Kedah, Kelantan, Pahang, Perak and Terengganu) in November 2015. This involved 58 implementation units with a total of 15 023 primary school children aged 7 and 8 years old. All the implementation units successfully passed the transmission assessment survey.

Marshall Islands
A microplan and proposal for an additional survey to assess transmission of lymphatic filariasis in the two originally endemic atolls was developed with the support of WHO, as per the recommendation of the Regional Programme Review Group (RPRG) in July 2015. The survey proposal obtained ethical clearance from WHO in December 2015. Implementation of the survey is planned in February 2016.

Micronesia (Federated States of)
The training and microplanning workshop on MDA against lymphatic filariasis in Chuuk was conducted in August 2015. Chuuk was originally not classified as endemic at the beginning of the Pacific Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis, but the national survey conducted in 2012 found 1.69% antigenaemia prevalence among the children attending grade 9, and the RPRG in 2014 recommended to implement at least two rounds of MDA followed by a transmission assessment survey. The first round of MDA was implemented in December 2014, and the second one commenced in December 2015.

Mongolia
A workshop on strengthening the control of cystic echinococcosis and other neglected tropical diseases in Mongolia was held during 9 and 10 September, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

With support from WHO headquarters, a pilot study was undertaken on the online cystic echinococcosis case registration tool, to be used by ultrasonography doctors and epidemiologists in four provinces; and a questionnaire survey to understand the current practice of diagnosis of cystic echinococcosis being used by health professionals from 12 provinces was conducted by a local consultant. In addition, a focus group discussion was held in Umnugobo province with health professionals involved with cystic echinococcosis case management (including epidemiologists, surgeons, ultrasonographists, gastroenterologists and statisticians) to understand the challenges in surveillance of cystic echinococcosis in humans.

New Caledonia
As per the recommendation by the RPRG in 2014, WHO provided technical support to the Territorial Directorate of Health and Social Affairs in planning implementation of a survey to reconfirm absence of transmission of lymphatic filariasis in the Loyalty Islands. Implementation of the survey is planned in 2016.

Palau
Discussions continued with WHO to design and conduct a survey among migrants from other countries where lymphatic filariasis is still endemic to assess the potential risk of reintroduction of transmission, as per the recommendation by the RPRG in 2014. The survey is planned for 2016.

Papua New Guinea
The Department of Health completed a baseline seroprevalence survey for lymphatic filariasis in four provinces – Sundaun (West Sepik), East Sepik, East New Britain and West New Britain – in November 2015. The survey was conducted at province level and reported a high prevalence of infection in all examined provinces.
Philippines

The Department of Health organized a joint mission in September 2015 by WHO headquarters and the country office to support development of a monitoring and evaluation plan for schistosomiasis elimination. The mission visited the province of Mindoro Occidental, where treatment coverage of above 85% has been reportedly maintained since 2011 and the prevalence of infection at sentinel sites has remained at 0% since 2012, but the focal survey found 16.2% prevalence in survey sites. The mission recommended specific measures to address the possible high reinfection rate, extensive distribution of snail habitats and migration of people, and encouraged continued close monitoring and MDA.

Technical assistance was provided by the Chinese Centre for Diseases Control and Prevention, through the coordination of WHO, from 7 to 22 December 2015 for development of (a) national policy on diagnosis, treatment and management of animal schistosomiasis; (b) the survey protocol on the burden of animal schistosomiasis and the contribution of domestic animal species to disease transmission; and (c) the draft plan for the control of animal schistosomiasis to be part of the national schistosomiasis elimination plan in the Philippines. The outcome of the technical assistance was discussed with the Bureau of Animal Industry in the Department of Agriculture and it was agreed to pilot implementation of the survey protocol in Leyte province in 2016.

The Department of Health conducted annual focal surveys on prevalence of soil-transmitted helminthiasis and schistosomiasis in selected endemic provinces in Regions 2, 4B, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11.

The Department of Health conducted the first nationwide school-based deworming day (NSDD) on 29 July 2015 in its effort to improve coordination and timely reporting from all regions and municipalities by shifting from the conventional decentralized implementation of deworming campaigns at municipality level. Approximately 11 million school-aged children were dewormed on the day, and in the mop-up activity in the following week. The experience and lessons learned in the first NSDD were applied in the second NSDD held in January 2016. This includes the national training conducted in November 2015 on prevention and management of severe adverse events during the mass drug administration.

Six provinces were acknowledged to have achieved the status of elimination of lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem as per the Department of Health guidelines, namely Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Davao Oriental, Sarangani, Maguindanao and Sulu.

Samoa

Discussions continued with WHO to carry out microplanning for MDA in 2016. The previous round of MDA was conducted in February 2015. Implementation of a survey of sentinel and spot check sites to determine their eligibility for a transmission assessment survey are to follow implementation of the planned MDA at the end of 2016 or early 2017.

Solomon Islands

The Ministry of Health completed MDA against trachoma in Choiseul province, which was not covered in the last MDA campaign in 2014. An impact assessment of the MDA on trachoma transmission is planned in 2016. In the meantime, the impact of the MDA in 2014 against trachoma on prevalence of yaws was assessed and published in August 2015. The assessment found no more cases of active yaws and a significant reduction in latent infection six months after a single round of MDA.

Tonga

The final transmission assessment survey in 2015 indicated that the country had achieved the required threshold. The planning for development of the dossier for validation of elimination of lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem was therefore initiated, with technical assistance from WHO.

The Ministry of Health commenced school deworming in and around Nuku’alofa on the main island. The expansion of the deworming campaign to cover outer islands is planned for 2016.

Tuvalu

Planning continued for MDA against lymphatic filariasis in early 2016. In addition, two rounds of deworming against soil-transmitted helminthiasis are planned for 2016. The last round of MDA against lymphatic filariasis was implemented in November 2014.

Vanuatu

The Ministry of Health organized the hydrocelectomy project with support of the Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases and WHO in November 2015. There were 25 estimated cases of hydroceles with surgical backlog, of which eight cases were presented for examination by the external surgeon deployed by the project. However, seven of the eight cases were diagnosed as inguinal hernias, while one was diagnosed as lymphedema with swollen scrotum. Therefore, no surgical operation for hydroceles took place.

The Ministry of Health implemented semi-annual deworming campaigns for school-aged children against soil-transmitted helminthiasis on a six-monthly cycle throughout the country (January to June and July to November in 2015), and continued the nationwide surveillance activities for yaws following the total community treatment conducted in 2013 and 2014.

Viet Nam

A workshop for development of monitoring and evaluation indicators for parasitic diseases for the period 2016–2020 was conducted in December 2015. The workshop also aimed to develop the reporting forms to facilitate timely transmission of treatment data from communes through districts to province level.

Deworming campaigns for women of childbearing age were conducted in November 2015 in 558 communes of
33 districts in three selected provinces, namely Ha Giang, Lao Cai and Cao Bang, with the support of World Vision. The campaigns reportedly reached over 90% of women of childbearing age in the targeted provinces.

Wallis and Futuna

Preparation continued with the support of WHO for implementation of a transmission assessment survey to be regarded as the final assessment survey before initiating development of dossier, which is planned for March 2016.

2 Regional News

The 15th Meeting of the Western Pacific RPRG on Neglected Tropical Diseases was held from 20 to 22 July 2015 in Davao City, the Philippines. In addition to RPRG members, selected national NTD programme managers and representatives of stakeholder institutions participated in the meeting. The meeting reviewed the progress of NTD elimination and control activities and the joint application packages for requesting donation of medicines from WHO in endemic countries in the Region. The RPRG also conducted a provisional review of the three draft dossiers submitted by Cambodia, the Cook Islands and the Marshall Islands on elimination of lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem. The RPRG acknowledged the new generic framework for the control, elimination and eradication of NTDs endorsed by the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for NTDs, and the need to establish a regional reviewing authority, the Regional Dossier Review Group, appointed by the Regional Director for the Western Pacific, to review and endorse dossiers submitted by Member States.

Calls for applications for the Joint TDR/WPR Small Grants Scheme for implementation research in infectious diseases of poverty closed on 30 June 2015, having received a total of 69 applications, of which 35 were on NTDs, including dengue and leprosy. After evaluation of the submitted applications, seven proposals from China, Cambodia, Malaysia, Mongolia and the Philippines, focusing on such NTDs as soil-transmitted helminthiasis, echinococcosis, dengue, clonorchiasis and leprosy, were funded by the scheme. Research studies are being conducted for 12 months, starting in the fourth quarter of 2015.

3 Other News

Dr Eva-Maria Christophel, the former Coordinator of the Malaria, Other Vectorborne and Parasitic Diseases (MVP) Unit at the Regional Office for the Western Pacific, accepted the appointment as the Regional Advisor for Malaria at the Regional Office for South-East Asia, effective on 1 November 2015.

Dr Rabindra Abeyasinghe, the former Regional Entomologist and Medical Officer at the MVP Unit, has assumed the position of the Coordinator, MVP Unit, effective on 1 November 2015.

Dr Aya Yajima, the former Technical Officer at the Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases at WHO headquarters, moved to the MVP Unit at the Regional Office for the Western Pacific as the Technical Officer (Neglected Tropical Diseases and Programme Integration), effective 1 September 2015.

Events Calendar

Neglected Tropical Diseases Programme Management Meeting

18-19 July 2016, Manila, Philippines

The Western Pacific Region has made significant progress in elimination and control of NTDs. Many countries have eliminated lymphatic filariasis, trachoma and leprosy as a public health problems. The bi-annual NTD programme managers meeting will provide an opportunity for countries to share experiences and discuss ways to ensure NTD elimination and programme sustainability beyond elimination, with specific emphasis on transitioning to people-centered integrated health service delivery.

The 16th Meeting of the Regional Programme Review Group on Neglected Tropical Diseases

20-21 July 2016, Manila, Philippines

The RPRG meeting this year will involve relevant programme managers and partners and focus on in-depth discussion of key technical issues identified through analysis of progress of NTD control activities in advance of the meeting and those highlighted during the proceeding Programme Managers Meeting, leading to clear and concrete recommendations on the way forward for countries, the Secretariat and the partners. The meeting will also have preliminary discussion on development of the draft regional framework for elimination and control of NTDs 2017 and beyond, planned to be developed following conclusion of the current Regional Action Plan on NTDs 2012-2016.