

Schistosomiasis Control Program

THE
CARTER CENTER



The Carter Center provides health education and treatment for schistosomiasis in Nigeria, the world's most endemic country for this preventable but devastating disease.

ABOUT THE CARTER CENTER

A nongovernmental organization, The Carter Center has helped to improve life for people in more than 80 countries by resolving conflicts, advancing human rights, preventing diseases, and improving mental health care.

WHAT IS SCHISTOSOMIASIS?



Schistosomiasis, also known as bilharziasis or “snail fever,” is a waterborne **parasitic infection** that damages internal organs. The most common symptoms are blood in urine or feces and an enlarged liver, diarrhea, abdominal pain, weakness, and anemia.



The disease is contracted when a person has contact with **contaminated water**, often through daily activities such as swimming, bathing, washing laundry, or fetching water. It most commonly affects **school-age children**. The parasite can live for years in the veins near the bladder or intestines, laying thousands of eggs that tear and scar internal organs. Snails are infected when freshwater is contaminated by eggs excreted in human urine and feces. Infected snails release a form of the parasite that infects humans when they expose their skin to water.



A schoolboy in Nigeria shows the test strip used with a urine sample to determine likely presence of the parasite that causes schistosomiasis. The Carter Center helps provide the drug praziquantel, which treats and prevents the disease.

HOW WIDESPREAD IS THE DISEASE?



More than **290 million people worldwide** need treatment for schistosomiasis, about 25 million of whom are in Nigeria.

In terms of socioeconomic and public health impact, schistosomiasis is among the most devastating parasitic diseases in tropical countries. It weakens resistance to other infections and **prevents children from reaching their full potential** because of anemia, stunted growth, and delayed development.

OUR STRATEGY



Schistosomiasis can be controlled and treated easily with a **single annual dose** of the donated drug praziquantel, which can reverse up to 90% of the damage caused by the parasite. It is administered mostly at schools according to a schedule set by the World Health Organization.

The Carter Center assists Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Health in providing **health education and the drug praziquantel** to treat schistosomiasis in nine Nigerian states, where the burden of the disease is greatest. This cooperative effort is the largest schistosomiasis treatment initiative in Nigeria.



A Nigerian woman washes clothes in a river. Schistosomiasis is easily contracted through everyday activities in water, including swimming and laundry.

WHERE WE WORK



RESULTS AND IMPACT

28+ million

Number of praziquantel treatments delivered with assistance from The Carter Center in Nigeria since 1999

50%

Approximate reduction in the presence of blood in schoolchildren's urine—a telltale sign of schistosomiasis infection—in Plateau and Nasarawa states since 1999

The Carter Center is a leader in the elimination and eradication of neglected tropical diseases.