

Guinea Worm Eradication and Millennium Development Goals

Investing in Guinea Worm is Investing in Humanity

At the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders agreed to a set of measurable targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women by the year 2015. Placed at the heart of the global agenda, these targets are now called the Millennium Development Goals. This graphic shows how the effort to eradicate Guinea worm is part of a larger effort to improve global health.

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Goal 1: *Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*

A debilitating disease, Guinea worm decreases farm productivity. In three rice-growing Nigerian states, the annual economic losses reached \$20 million USD.¹ Research in Mali linked a 5 percent drop in production of two food crops to Guinea worm disease.² Yam production in Nanumba district of Ghana increased by 33 percent the year after Guinea worm disease was reduced by 77 percent.³

Goal 8: *Create a global partnership for development*

The Guinea Worm Eradication Program has been called an example of mobilization through partnerships¹⁰ which include governments, foundations, nongovernmental organizations, and corporations, as well as affected countries. The program has been identified by The Center for Global Development as an example of “exemplary coordination.”¹¹

Goal 7: *Ensure environmental sustainability*

Some 1.1 billion people, mostly in developing countries, lack access to safe water sources. Because Guinea worm is a water-borne disease, the campaign for eradication has helped many of these communities improve the quality of their water sources. In addition, millions of donated household and pipe filters aid communities with poor water sources.

Goal 6: *Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases*

Guinea worm was the second disease in history, after smallpox, to be targeted for eradication. Today, Guinea worm cases have been reduced by more than 99.5 percent since eradication efforts began in 1986, and tens of millions of cases have been prevented.^{8,9}

Goal 2: *Achieve universal primary education*

Pain caused by the disease keeps children from walking to school. In addition, school absenteeism increases when children must assume job duties for parents infected with Guinea worm.^{4,5}

Goal 3: *Promote gender equality and empower women*

In endemic communities, women often are responsible for water-related activities and health care for their households. Using this informal but crucial network, women are trained to carry out Guinea worm surveillance and community education. Ghana alone has 6,800 Red Cross women volunteers assisting the program, and in Benin, the creation of women’s clubs has helped stop transmission of the disease. Networking with women will far outlast the eradication campaign and can be used for other health interventions.

Goal 4: *Reduce child mortality*

Children in a household with adults infected with Guinea worm are three times more likely to be malnourished, increasing the risk of disease and early death.^{6,7} In developing countries, malnutrition plays a major role in half of all deaths of children under age 5.

Goal 5: *Reduce maternal mortality*

Fortunately, Guinea worm disease rarely causes mortality, but eradicating the disease improves the overall health of a community.

Reference list is provided on next page.

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9. Kim A, 1997. Cost-benefit analysis of the global dracunculiasis eradication campaign. Policy Research Working Paper 1835. The World Bank; Africa Human Development Department.
10. Since 1986, hundreds of partners have supported Guinea worm eradication. The Carter Center Web site (www.cartercenter.org) contains more information about the Guinea Worm Eradication Program and its partners.
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