

## Insecticides Vital in River Blindness Fight

*River blindness, also known as onchocerciasis, is a parasitic infection spread by the bites of small black flies that breed in rapidly flowing rivers. It is one of the leading causes of preventable blindness in the world and is endemic to 37 countries in Africa and Latin America.*



The Carter Center/K. Hinton

## Sprays Needed to Tackle the Vector

Insecticides have been a vital tool in the fight against river blindness. Huge progress was made in West Africa between 1974 and 2002 through the Onchocerciasis Control Programme (OCP) which used insecticides against aquatic stages of the blackfly. The WHO estimates the OCP relieved 40 million people from infection, prevented blindness in 600,000 people, and ensured that 18 million children were born free from the threat of the disease and blindness. In addition, 25 million hectares of abandoned arable land were reclaimed for settlement and agricultural production, capable of feeding 17 million people annually. But the problem continues.



The Carter Center/M. Katarbarwa

## BASF Fights River Blindness in Uganda

BASF is collaborating with The Carter Center to support the Ugandan Ministry of Health in its program to eliminate river blindness nationwide. The BASF larvicide Abate® is used by the national river blindness program in select areas as part of its effort to interrupt transmission of the disease and

wipe out the debilitating parasitic disease by 2020. “We are impressed with the country’s determination to wipe out this ancient disease and with our contribution we are excited to support Uganda, through The Carter Center, to improve the quality of life for millions,” said Dr. Egon Weinmueller, head of BASF’s public health business.

## Eradication of Disease is the Goal

Since 2007, when Uganda decided to pursue elimination of river blindness, significant progress has been achieved in with the halt of river blindness transmission from eight of 17 recent endemic areas, freeing about 1.35 million people from the scourge. This focus to eliminate river blindness builds upon Uganda’s 2003 success in stopping transmission of Guinea worm, a parasitic infection transmitted by drinking infected water.