

USAID Announces \$100 Million Award to Reduce Impact of Neglected Tropical Diseases in Developing Nations

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WASHINGTON, DC - Today, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) announced a \$100 million award to the nonprofit research organization RTI International to reduce the impact of neglected tropical diseases in developing nations.

The project, which will treat more than 40 million people for five years, represents one of the first large-scale efforts to integrate existing disease-specific treatment programs to care for millions of the world's poorest people. The project will build on the success of those programs, bringing them to national scale and enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency by integrating treatment, monitoring and evaluation programs.

"This significant investment will improve the lives of millions of people afflicted with disabling conditions through effective, low-cost, mass drug administration and associated education programs," said Richard Greene, Director of the Office of Health, Infectious Disease and Nutrition at USAID.

The USAID-funded program will focus on controlling seven of the most prevalent neglected tropical diseases; trachoma (blinding eye infection), hookworm, ascaris, trichuris (three soil-transmitted worms), onchocerciasis (river blindness), schistosomiasis (snail fever) and lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis).

These particular diseases were chosen because they cause a tremendous disease burden and can be treated through large-scale integrated programs using safe and effective drugs made available through public-private partnerships.

While they have little name recognition in developed societies, these diseases cause severe disabilities such as blindness, reduced mobility, impaired childhood growth and intellectual development, and disfigurements. Neglected diseases are responsible for about 415,000 deaths annually worldwide and are among the leading contributors to poverty in developing countries because those affected are often unable to join the workforce.

The project will target countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America that have a high prevalence of these diseases and have recognized them as a national health priority.

RTI and its partners will work with the ministries of health and nongovernmental organizations in each country to develop treatment programs that best meet the needs of each country. As part of the project, RTI will establish an independent committee that will award and oversee grants to countries and organizations that will benefit from mass treatment campaign.

For more information on USAID's programs in neglected tropical diseases, please visit http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/.

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