

CHAPTER: 01

NATIONAL DEWORMING DAY, FEBRUARY 2018 PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION IN BIHAR

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INTRODUCTION

Soil-transmitted helminth (STH) infections are widespread across the globe and predominantly impact the most impoverished and disadvantaged communities. These infections result from the transmission of eggs present in human feces, contaminating soil in areas with inadequate sanitation. Roundworms (*Ascaris lumbricoides*), whipworms (*Trichuris trichiura*), and hookworms (*Necator americanus* and *Ancylostoma duodenale*) are the main vectors of infection. Roughly 2 billion individuals globally, or 25% of the global population, are afflicted with helminth infections [1]. Children who are malnourished or anaemic frequently exhibit underweight and stunted growth. Significantly infected people could be too sick or exhausted to concentrate on their academics, or they might even skip school entirely. Worm infections have adverse effects on the physical and cognitive development of children, potentially leading to long-term consequences for their adult work potential and wages. Research indicates that regular deworming can reduce school absenteeism by 25% [2].

According to WHO [3], India is a region with a high prevalence of soil-transmitted helminths. In 2017, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare undertook a nationwide initiative to map soil-transmitted helminths in collaboration with the National Centre for Disease Control in New Delhi and various partners. In order to help create state-wide estimates and inform judgements about the frequency of deworming therapy in accordance with WHO standards, the goal of this mapping project was to collect data on the prevalence and frequency of soil-transmitted helminth infections.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To comprehend the implementation of National Deworming Day in Bihar in February 2018.
2. To assess the implementation status at schools and Anganwadi centers on National Deworming Day on February 19, 2018, and the subsequent mop-up day on March 7, 2018.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study, which lasted for four months from February to May 2018, was a descriptive investigation conducted in Bihar. A desk review was carried out to comprehend the National Deworming Day (NDD) implementation nationally and specifically to review the implementation in Bihar for February 2018. Data utilized for this analysis was sourced from various outlets such as NDD operational guidelines, WHO guidelines, and presentations from NDD National Review Meetings, State Coordination Committee Meetings, and state operational plans.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Observations indicated that prominently displayed posters were present in 98% of schools and 95% of anganwadis. When teachers and anganwadi workers were asked about the source of information for the recent NDD round, responses (depicted in Graph 9) revealed that training, followed by departmental level communications, played a crucial role in disseminating information to frontline workers. Therefore, precision and timeliness in instructions during training sessions are essential.

Prior to the NDD event, program preparedness was evaluated through tele-callers who monitored the training status, drug delivery, and availability of materials at various levels, including district, block, school, and anganwadi. Using pre-designed and standardized tracking sheets, tele-callers identified implementation gaps during follow-up phone calls. To enhance efficiency, an automated web-based application for tele-calling was introduced in collaboration with a technology partner. The compiled tele-calling sheets were shared with the state government on a daily basis to enable prompt corrective actions, such as issuing directives, reinforcing messages through video conferences, coordinating with officials, or sending SMS reinforcements. Field visits by Evidence Action's district and regional coordinators were also conducted to facilitate corrective actions at the district and block levels.

CONCLUSION

Bihar, with its well-established and extensive school-based program, provides valuable insights that can be applied to other state health programs. A high-quality initiative in line with the NDD framework is anticipated to contribute to a decrease in the prevalence and intensity of soil-transmitted helminths (STH) in the state. The dual strategy of administering deworming tablets in the short term, coupled with a long-term emphasis on promoting improved sanitation, hygiene, and health education, aligns with the goals outlined in NDD and the WHO. The incorporation of NDD in the national government's Niti Ayog Nutrition Strategy, unveiled in September 2017, demonstrates the policy and political acknowledgment of deworming as a pivotal initiative to address malnutrition.

REFERENCES

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