



## Introduction

Increasing access to food and good nutrition is essential for improving the lives of those living in poverty around the world. When a person (and particularly, a child) has enough good, nutritious food to eat, he or she experiences positive outcomes that can last a lifetime, including improved health and education, as well as the ability to work productively and contribute to society.

**Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) - a group of bacterial and parasitic diseases that infect one in six people around the world - can often undermine the effects of good nutrition.**

## How NTDs Impact Nutrition

Controlling NTDs is an important part of improving nutrition. One in five children in developing countries is underweight, and NTDs can exacerbate the effects of malnourishment. Schistosomiasis (snail fever) and intestinal worm infections lead to anemia, malnutrition or both. Even when children and adults have enough food to eat, these diseases can rob their bodies of the nutrients they need. Together, schistosomiasis and intestinal worms infect more than one billion people.



Intestinal worm infections and schistosomiasis cause anemia and malnutrition. Some NTDs, like hookworm and ascariasis (roundworm), actually consume key nutrients in the body or can impair the absorption of nutrients.

Anemia and malnutrition weaken the body, often undermining the effects of proper nutrition and contributing to poor outcomes for physical health and development.

Over the long term, anemia and malnutrition can increase health risks for expectant mothers, lead to low birth weight and cause delays in physical and cognitive development for children.

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## NTDs and Food Security

NTDs can have detrimental economic effects, leaving subsistence farmers unable to work and produce crops needed to feed themselves and their families.

For example, the effects of lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis) – including huge swelling of the limbs – often prevent subsistence farmers from working, and cause a billion dollars in lost productivity in India alone each year.

The risk of infection with onchocerciasis (river blindness) often prevents people from occupying arable farming land in Africa. But, through the successful work of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC) and the Onchocerciasis Control Programme (OCP), 25 million hectares of land – enough to feed approximately 17 million people per year - is now safe for resettlement and cultivation.

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## Combining Efforts

**Several studies have shown that combining deworming with other nutritional improvement programs – such as vitamin A and iron supplementation – can lead to better outcomes than providing supplements alone.**

Recognizing these benefits, the United Nations World Food Programme has incorporated deworming into its school-based feeding programs in more than 60 countries. For those infected with schistosomiasis, treatment will also reduce anemia and improve nutritional status.

The 2012 Copenhagen Consensus – a project intended to set priorities for improvements in global welfare - gave further proof that a comprehensive approach to food security that includes deworming provides a “best buy” in public health.

The project’s team of leading economists found malnutrition to be the single most important area for investment and argued for bundling interventions, including treatment for intestinal worms, in order to provide a greater return on this investment.



**Deworming treatment can significantly increase the return on investments of nutrition supplementation programs.**

## More Information

For more information, please visit [www.globalnetwork.org](http://www.globalnetwork.org).