

Interim Report April 2, 2019**I Project summary**

The WHO published data in 2016 that demonstrates the current need for and coverage of the schistosomiasis treatment Praziquantel (PZQ), a both a preventative and a treatment for already infected patients, in Madagascar. According to the WHO, 8.6 million people in Madagascar would need to receive treatment to reduce the local burden of Schistosomiasis. However, only 19% of those in-need currently receive PZQ, making Madagascar a high-burden country for schistosomiasis infection as well as for schistosomiasis-related mortality and morbidity.

The SOMA (Schistosomiasis in Madagascar) project aims to reduce the burden of schistosomiasis infection intensity and prevalence in at-risk populations. The SOMA project consists of 2 phases of mass drug administration (MDA) campaigns of PZQ in high-risk populations as well the establishment of efficient and effective resources for schistosomiasis prevention and control, i.e.: WASH education/training programs and water and sanitation infrastructure.

I Community mobilization

After discussion of the local infrastructure and engaging with political as well as health officials, the SOMA team addressed community mobilization on three different levels: 1) informing mayors in each community and 2) informing district health agents/hospital staff at health facilities in target areas about the study and prospective activity dates; and 3) informing the

general population using the local catholic radio station “Radio Maria” to announce the treatment on the community-specific market day.

In January, three meetings were held: 1) one meeting in Tsarasaotra involving the mayor, approximately 30 village chiefs, and 30 community representatives; 2) one meeting in Ambositra involving 18 community mayors; and 3) one meeting in Ambositra involving 20 mayors, approximately 20 physicians and 15 district health authorities.

The team provided background information on Schistosomiasis, as well as an introduction and explanation of the importance of the SOMA program in the local language, Malagasy. The political and health officials expressed their support for SOMA activities, the importance of addressing people’s health, and for taking a first step to improve health in this region with this program.

During the meetings, all levels of leadership in attendance agreed to distribute the discussed information on the disease background and program activities in their respective communities and to prepare a list of participants to estimate the PZQ needs of each community during the MDA-campaign.

The meetings were covered by the broadcast station, TV Madagascar and were aired during the daily news segment.

| WASH activities



| Definition of WASH activities

In response to the limited success of flyers and other educational materials typically used for WASH campaigns, the SOMA team discussed possible alternatives. The main component included the construction of toilet facilities at key locations throughout the community. In addition, a more modern facility will be constructed within a school area of one community (including primary, secondary and high schools), with the engagement of parents and children, to provide access to safe water.

Building materials were purchased and transported to the study sites in January and February, 2019 and local teams started the construction of toilet facilities at a secondary school and at the market in Ambositra, as well as at the community center in Andina. Upon completion, the IVI study team visited the site for the inauguration of the toilet facilities.



New toilet at the community center



New toilet at the market

The permanent safe water access facilities will be built in May and June 2019, after the end of the rainy season.

| Mass drug administration

Approximately 80,000 people in Amoron'i Mania and approximately 10,000 people in Vakinankaratra are targeted for PZQ treatment. Because primary and secondary schools already provide PZQ treatment for their students through a joint WHO/Merck PZQ donation program, the SOMA project is targeting adults, high school children, and children who do not attend school.

The amount of PZQ needed for the targeted study population was calculated and the study team decided to procure all supplies and PZQ in Madagascar to avoid potential shipping issue-related delays. Preliminary PZQ administration “par exemple” was conducted for all governmental and health official meeting participants in Amoron'i Mania and Vakinankaratra regions throughout the community mobilization area. The main PZQ administration campaign will take place in July and August 2019.

| About Schistosomiasis

Schistosomiasis, a chronic infection caused by parasitic worms, is a poverty-related, neglected tropical disease. It potentially affects one billion people in nearly 80 countries. An estimated 200 million people are already infected, and an additional 800 million people are at risk of infection. The estimated number of fatalities ranges from 24,072 to 200,000 globally per year, with the number believed to have decreased considerably from 200,000 in 2000 (WHO). Schistosomiasis is usually spread by contaminated water, and is more common in areas with poor sanitation.

Thank you

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