Deworm the World Initiative

Helping governments deliver deworming treatments that improve children’s health, education, and long-term wellbeing.

Recommended by GiveWell and The Life You Can Save as one of the most cost-effective interventions in the world.
WHY DEWORM?

Over 868 million children globally are at risk of contracting parasitic worm infections. If left untreated, infections can lead to anemia, malnourishment, and impaired mental and physical development—ultimately affecting children’s educational outcomes and income as adults.

Children can go years undiagnosed, enduring a persistent feeling of weakness and malaise, making it difficult for them to attend or concentrate in school. Worms disproportionately affect the poor, who are less able to afford the costs of diagnosis and treatment.

Our program brings free treatment to children at their schools instead of placing the burden on the families to obtain it. We partner with governments to regularly treat all at-risk children in places where at least 20% are infected with worms, as recommended by the World Health Organization.

Evidence Action’s Deworm the World Initiative helps governments launch, scale, and sustain school-based deworming programs. For less than $0.50 per treatment, children are freed from worm infection, improving their health and enabling them to attend school regularly.
How It Works

Our government partnerships work through a technical assistance model, where we support governments to design and deliver high-quality programs.

LEVERAGE: Instead of building a delivery infrastructure from scratch and operating it ourselves—which would be costly and inefficient—we leverage existing government infrastructure, and build support systems to increase the impact.

END-TO-END SUPPORT: We get involved from program inception—advocating with policymakers about the need and importance of school-based deworming—and with their buy-in, collaborate to co-design the program, iterate to improve it, and ensure program goals are met.

SYSTEMS: We create a set of systems to help governments launch, scale, and sustain high-quality deworming programs, and rigorously monitor and assess them to enable regular improvements.

With this model, we have achieved unparalleled impact at a lower cost than virtually any other organization conducting deworming programs. In 2014, we reached 35 million children. Today, we support governments to reach over 280 million annually—one-third of all at-risk children globally—at an average cost of less than $0.50 per child per treatment, and as low as $0.05 in India.

“Of the deworming charities we have evaluated, [Deworm the World] has the strongest track record of demonstrating that its programs are effective.”

- GiveWell, 2018

WHY IT WORKS

We help governments deliver deworming treatments to where children are easiest to reach: at schools. Once or twice a year, teachers—with support from the health system—give the treatment to their students. Children who are not enrolled in school are also eligible to receive the medication.

SCHOOL-BASED DEWORMING WORKS BECAUSE:

- It leverages existing education infrastructure, making it easy to reach children.
- Teachers are trusted by their communities and can be easily trained to administer medication.
- Treatment is cheap, effective, and safe—even for those who are uninfected.
EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Independent rigorous research, including by Nobel Laureate Michael Kremer, shows that deworming leads to significant improvements in nutrition, cognition, school participation, and future earnings.

+ A meta-analysis found that deworming programs lead to an average weight gain of 0.3kg in children, equivalent to moving a three-year-old from the 25th to the 50th percentile of WHO child growth standards.1

+ Children who were less than one year old when their siblings received deworming treatment show significant cognitive gains comparable to between 0.5 and 0.8 years of schooling.2

+ A randomized controlled trial in Western Kenya found that children who received deworming had a 25% reduction in school absenteeism, when compared to those who did not.3

+ Following those same children in Kenya, researchers found that receiving two to three additional years of deworming increased their income by 13% and consumption by 14% two decades after treatment.4

+ A study using historical data from the United States in the 1910s found that parasitic worms could have explained as much as 22% of the early income gap between the North and South.5

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