

# Ivory Coast benefits from schistosomiasis programme

At a school located roughly 25 km north-west of Abidjan, representatives from Merck, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Ivory Coast's ministry of health announced the launch of a praziquantel tablet distribution programme to fight schistosomiasis in the country.



At a celebration of the pharmaceutical company's donation of its 50 millionth tablet to the WHO held at the primary school in the village of Attinguie, representatives of the Ministry of Health of Ivory Coast and the British Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (SCI) administered tablets to the children. Depending on their height, the children receive between one and five tablets. Furthermore, the teachers explained to them the causes of the tropical worm disease. For this purpose, Merck has donated a total of 20,000 educational booklets to WHO for Ivory Coast.

Merck's engagement in fighting schistosomiasis dates back to 2007 and involves 35 countries in Africa. More than 100m patients, primarily school children, have been treated to date. "We are committed to further donating up to 250m tablets annually until this devastating disease has been eliminated," explained Belén Garijo, member of the Merck executive board and CEO healthcare. "

According to WHO, almost 20% of the Ivory Coast population requires treatment. To date, the development agency, USAID and SCI have supported the government of Ivory Coast in its fight against schistosomiasis. As a member of the Global Schistosomiasis Alliance,

Consequently, Ivory Coast is benefiting for the first time from the partnership between Merck and WHO. For 2017, Merck will provide WHO with 6,5m tablets for the West African country.

Schistosomiasis affects an estimated 260m people worldwide. The infection rate is especially high among children, and the consequences are serious.

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