

India launches campaign for deworming millions of children

February 10 2016, by Ashok Sharma



An Indian schoolchild takes a deworming tablet in Hyderabad, India, Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2016 as part of a massive national deworming campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting their bodies and impairing their mental and physical development. The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country. (AP Photo/Mahesh Kumar A.)

Millions of Indian children are getting deworming treatment in a massive national campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting them and

impairing their mental and physical development.

In a village on the outskirts of the Indian capital, the children washed their hands and lined up to chew the deworming tablets given to them by their teachers and health workers before opening their bags for studies on Wednesday morning.

The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country for Wednesday's effort and another next week for children missed the first time, the Health Ministry said in a statement.

Worms interfere with nutrient uptake in children and could lead to anemia, malnourishment and physical and mental impairment. The infection risk is mainly caused by lack of proper toilets, unclean drinking water, poor hygiene and dirty surroundings.

The World Health Organization estimates that 220 million children between the ages of 1 and 14 are at risk of parasitic worm infection in India.

On Wednesday, nearly 900,000 teachers, principals and health workers were mobilized in schools and government-sponsored child and mother care centers.

The deworming initiative, along with measures to address hygiene and sanitation, would go a long way in improving the health of children as well as that of the country, said By Poonam Khetrapal Singh, the WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia. In a statement, Singh said India's campaign complements WHO's battle against neglected tropical diseases, those on the verge of elimination that continue to be public health challenges.



A health worker administers a deworming pill to a girl in a village in Neemrana , 123 kilometers (76.8 miles) from New Delhi, in the Indian state of Rajasthan, Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2016. Millions of Indian children are taking part in a massive national deworming campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting their bodies and impairing their mental and physical development. The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country with a second treatment planned next week for those left out on Wednesday, India's Health Ministry said in a statement. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)

Priya Jha, who leads non-governmental organization Evidence Action's work in India, said details of a second dose to the children would be decided soon by the Indian government on the basis of a study carried out in different states.

She said the campaign went off smoothly with children and their parents eager to participate in it. The tablets were provided by the WHO and the Indian government.



Indian schoolchildren line up to take a deworming tablet in Hyderabad, India, Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2016 as part of a massive national deworming campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting their bodies and impairing their mental and physical development. The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country. (AP Photo/Mahesh Kumar A.)



Students sit in the ground after taking deworming pills in their school in Neemrana, 123 kilometers (76.8 miles) from New Delhi, in the Indian state of Rajasthan, Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2016. Millions of Indian children are taking part in a massive national deworming campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting their bodies and impairing their mental and physical development. The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country with a second treatment planned next week for those left out on Wednesday, India's Health Ministry said in a statement. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)



A girl drinks water after chewing a deworming pill in their school in Neemrana, 123 kilometers (76.8 miles) from New Delhi, in the Indian state of Rajasthan, Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2016. Millions of Indian children are taking part in a massive national deworming campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting their bodies and impairing their mental and physical development. The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country with a second treatment planned next week for those left out on Wednesday, India's Health Ministry said in a statement. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)



A primary class student takes a deworming pill as others wait in a queue at a school in Neemrana, 123 kilometers (76.8 miles) from New Delhi, in the Indian state of Rajasthan Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2016. Millions of Indian children are taking part in a massive national deworming campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting their bodies and impairing their mental and physical development. The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country with a second treatment planned next week for those left out on Wednesday, India's Health Ministry said in a statement. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)



Girls take deworming pills in their school in Neemrana, 123 kilometers (76.8 miles) from New Delhi, in the Indian state of Rajasthan, Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2016. Millions of Indian children are taking part in a massive national deworming campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting their bodies and impairing their mental and physical development. The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country with a second treatment planned next week for those left out on Wednesday, India's Health Ministry said in a statement. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)



A girl takes a deworming pill as others wait in a queue at a school in Neemrana, 123 kilometers (76.8 miles) from New Delhi, in the Indian state of Rajasthan Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2016. Millions of Indian children are taking part in a massive national deworming campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting their bodies and impairing their mental and physical development. The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country with a second treatment planned next week for those left out on Wednesday, India's Health Ministry said in a statement. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)



School children line up to wash their hands before taking deworming pill at a school in Neemrana, 123 kilometers (76.8 miles) from New Delhi, in the Indian state of Rajasthan Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2016. Millions of Indian children are taking part in a massive national deworming campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting their bodies and impairing their mental and physical development. The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country with a second treatment planned next week for those left out on Wednesday, India's Health Ministry said in a statement. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)



A school teacher gives a deworming pill to a student as others wait in a queue in Neemrana, 123 kilometers (76.8 miles) from New Delhi, in the Indian state of Rajasthan Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2016. Millions of Indian children are taking part in a massive national deworming campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting their bodies and impairing their mental and physical development. The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country with a second treatment planned next week for those left out on Wednesday, India's Health Ministry said in a statement. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)



Students gather around a poster of deworming at their school in Neemrana, 123 kilometers (76.8 miles) from New Delhi, in the Indian state of Rajasthan, Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2016. Millions of Indian children are taking part in a massive national deworming campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting their bodies and impairing their mental and physical development. The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country with a second treatment planned next week for those left out on Wednesday, India's Health Ministry said in a statement. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)



Students show their deworming pills before taking in their school in Neemrana ,123 kilometers (76.8 miles) from New Delhi, in the Indian state of Rajasthan, Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2016. Millions of Indian children are taking part in a massive national deworming campaign to prevent parasitic worms from infecting their bodies and impairing their mental and physical development. The campaign is targeting 270 million children across the country with a second treatment planned next week for those left out on Wednesday, India's Health Ministry said in a statement. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)

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