



Helen Keller International

352 Park Avenue South, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10010
212.532.0544
212.532.6014 fax
www.hki.org

CONTACT:

Jennifer Klopp, Vice President of Development and Communications
Helen Keller International
212-532-0544 x808
jklopp@hki.org

**MORE THAN 1 MILLION RECEIVE
PREVENTATIVE TREATMENT FOR ELEPHANTIASIS**

June 8, 2010, Freetown, Sierra Leone – Between June 3rd and June 7th the government of Sierra Leone carried out its most successful campaign to stop lymphatic filariasis, more commonly known as elephantiasis. While many African countries struggle to reach more than 65% of the population, particularly in urban regions, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation successfully mobilized preventative treatments for more than 85% in Sierra Leone's Western Area of 1.2 million people.

Sierra Leone's National Neglected Tropical Disease Control Program (NTDCP), established in 2008, was responsible for the mass drug administration. With support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the NTD Control Program, Helen Keller International provided critical technical assistance to the National NTDCP, helping with program and budget planning, advocacy efforts, and the development of educational materials, in addition to assisting with the training sessions, social mobilization, and monitoring of the campaign activities. In addition to the NTDCP, the campaign involved the collaborative efforts of many groups including community health workers, the district health management team, local and national media outlets, maternal and child health aids, primary health care personnel, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Lymphatic Filariasis is the second leading cause of disability worldwide. It is caused by the presence of parasitic worms, which, over ten to twenty years, cause swelling in the feet or scrotum, and sometimes the arms or breasts. The swelling can be debilitating and is often accompanied by pain and fevers. Two drugs, ivermectin and albendazole, which are donated by the pharmaceutical companies Merck and Co., Inc. and GlaxoSmithKline are administered to treat the disease

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Founded in 1915, Helen Keller International's (HKI) mission is to save the sight and lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. HKI combats the causes and consequences of blindness and malnutrition by establishing programs based on evidence and research in vision, health and nutrition. The organization is known for sustainability, reliability, efficiency, and the highest level of technical expertise in preventing blindness and reducing malnutrition. HKI is headquartered in New York City, and has programs in 21 countries in Africa and Asia as well as in the United States, addressing malnutrition (including vitamin A deficiency), cataract, trachoma, onchocerciasis (river blindness) and refractive error. HKI receives support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and other national and local governments as well as from private and corporate foundations and individuals.

