



World Health
Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Europe**



Framework for control
and prevention of
soil-transmitted
helminthiases in the
WHO European Region
2016–2020



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ABSTRACT

Soil-transmitted helminthiases (STH) are among the most common human parasitic diseases. WHO estimates that over 2 billion people suffer from STH globally, including 4 million children in the WHO European Region. STH include ascariasis, trichuriasis, ancylostomiasis, necatoriasis, strongyloidiasis and toxocariasis. In 2001, the Fifty-fourth World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA54.19 with the goal to intensify efforts on control and elimination of soil-transmitted helminths. WHO's global STH control plan for 2011–2020 aims to eliminate STH as a public health problem among school-aged children by 2020. In support for intensifying its implementation, WHO adopted a global strategy on water, sanitation and hygiene for accelerating and sustaining progress on neglected tropical diseases for 2015–2020. This document represents a regional framework for STH control and prevention. It provides an overview of the current STH situation, the scope and purpose of the work ahead, and strategic approaches to and measures against STH in the Region. It aims to assist countries in the development of national strategies and programmes based on their epidemiological, socioeconomic and environmental contexts.

KEYWORDS

HELMINTHIASIS – PREVENTION AND CONTROL
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Executive summary

Over 2 billion people are estimated to suffer from soil-transmitted helminthiases (STH) globally, including 4 million children in the WHO European Region. The main species of helminth that infect people are the roundworm (*Ascaris lumbricoides*), the whipworm (*Trichuris trichiura*) and the hookworms (*Necator americanus* and *Ancylostoma duodenale*).

In 2001, the Fifty-fourth World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA54.19 with the goal to intensify efforts on control and elimination of soil-transmitted helminths in 2001–2010. However, by 2010 only 200 million school-aged children were reached with deworming interventions out of 600 million children in need of preventive chemotherapy. WHO's global STH control plan for 2011–2020 (1) sets out the goal of eliminating STH as a public health problem among school-aged children by 2020. In 2015, to further support and intensify the implementation of the resolution, WHO released *Water, sanitation and hygiene for accelerating and sustaining progress on neglected tropical diseases. A global strategy, 2015–2020* (2).

Over the last five years and in collaboration with several partners, WHO has provided research, technical and financial support to STH control and prevention in Member States. In 2012 and 2013, regional meetings on STH control and prevention were held at the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health in Bonn, Germany. The necessity of developing a regional framework on STH control and prevention was highlighted by all participating countries and supported by WHO headquarters and the WHO Regional Office for Europe. The draft regional framework was reviewed at the regional workshop on the progress achieved with prevention and control of STH, held on 25–27 November 2015 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

This document presents the regional framework for STH control and prevention. It provides an overview of the current STH situation, the scope and purpose of the work ahead, and strategic approaches and measures against STH in the Region. It aims to assist countries in the development of national policies and programmes based on their local epidemiological, socioeconomic and environmental contexts.

Soil-transmitted helminthiases as a public health problem

Soil-transmitted helminthiases (STH) are among the most common human parasitic diseases. STH include ascariasis, trichuriasis, ancylostomiasis, necatoriasis, strongyloidiasis and toxocariasis. All of them, except for toxocariasis, are anthroponotic diseases.

STH are common in all WHO regions, but the prevalence of STH varies significantly due to differences in socioeconomic, climate and other environmental factors such as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) conditions. WHO estimates that approximately 2 billion people suffer from STH globally, with the highest prevalence in tropical and subtropical regions and those with poor WASH conditions. The number of school-aged children affected by STH in the WHO European Region is estimated at over 4 million, with the highest prevalence in countries of central Asia and the southern Caucasus.

STH are transmitted through contaminated soil, food, water, hands and fomites. Thanks to improved living standards and better WASH conditions, these diseases have been gradually disappearing in many regions of the world. However, helminth infections are still an important and neglected public health problem, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

A 2013 situation analysis conducted in 12 countries of the Region identified serious barriers to the organization of an effective intervention system to control STH (3). The main barriers include high staff turnover in parasitology services, a general lack of education of medical personnel, insufficient laboratory and clinical diagnostic capacity, lack of regulatory and training frameworks and inadequate hygiene awareness among the population.

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