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**BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS
FOR LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS**

STRATEGIC PLAN

WORKING VERSION : SEPTEMBER 1999



World Health Organization

The Communicable Diseases Eradication and Elimination Department of the World Health Organization would like to express its appreciation to the Government of the United Kingdom and to SmithKline Beecham who supported the development of this plan

NOTE:

This strategic plan will continue to develop as the global programme develops. Thus it should be seen as "work in progress".

Copies may be requested from: World Health Organization



*Lymphatic Filariasis Elimination (CPE/CEE/FIL)
Control, Prevention and Eradication
CH-1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland
Fax: 41 22 791 4777
E-mail: filariasis@who.int
Website: <http://www.filariasis.org>*

OR from project Management

SB
SmithKline Beecham
SmithKline Beecham
One Franklin Plaza
FP2135, PO Box 7929 Philadelphia, PA 19101
Fax: 215-751-4046
E-mail: brian.bagnall@sb.com

Cover picture: A drawing from the late 12th Century showing a woman with elephantiasis: "Byousoushi-enakiminono". A national treasure from the Tokyo Museum. The Government of Japan successfully eliminated lymphatic filariasis from Japan between the years 1962 to 1971 with a nation-wide treatment campaign.

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PREFACE

Lymphatic filariasis (LF) commonly known as elephantiasis, is a painful and profoundly disfiguring disease that has a major social and economic impact in Asia, Africa, the Western Pacific and parts of the Americas. Until recently, little could be done to relieve the suffering and disability caused by this disease.

Today, however, significant advances have been made in understanding both the disease and its control. A global coalition has been forged among many organizations, each with a different mandate but all having a common goal: to tackle the wide-ranging and complex process of science and practice that will result in the elimination of LF as a public health problem¹ from the world.

A strong start was made in 1997 when the World Health Assembly passed a resolution calling for '*...the elimination of lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem...*'. Following this, WHO, with support from organizations including donor countries, the World Bank, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began developing a coalition to eliminate the disease.

The following year the coalition was given a powerful boost when SmithKline Beecham announced its commitment to form a unique private-sector/public-sector collaboration with WHO to support the global programme to eliminate lymphatic filariasis. The two organizations pledged to work together closely to undertake this massive international public health effort. Subsequently, Merck & Co., Inc. pledged to expand its ongoing Mectizan® Donation Program for onchocerciasis to cover treatment of lymphatic filariasis in all African countries where the two diseases occur together.

Individually, none of these organizations can eliminate LF; but by working together, and working through the Ministries of Health in the endemic countries, we believe that it can be done. Not all partners will work in each country, but, together, we hope to develop partnerships that will cover all of the affected countries and ensure an extraordinarily positive impact on many millions of lives.

¹ Throughout this strategic plan, the word 'elimination' is used to describe the more complete text used in the World Health Assembly resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This draft strategic plan has been compiled from contributions of all of the major partners now working towards elimination of lymphatic filariasis globally (see list of contributors, Annex 2). Its objective is not only to indicate an overall plan of action for the programme but also to allow each partner to define and appreciate the unique contribution that each of the organizations involved can make towards LF elimination.

There are seven major sections:

Introduction and Overview, is based largely on the LF Elimination Concept Paper² with additional input on the economic burden of LF³.

The Plan, describes objectives and targets for the first 3 years of the programme and is focussed on (1) stopping the spread of infection, (2) relieving and preventing suffering and disability, (3) essential technical support and (4) strategic operational research.

The Coalition Partners and their Roles, contains descriptions, by the partnering organizations themselves, of the special strengths each brings to LF elimination. Though differing in length and degree of detail, these descriptions show what the partners see themselves as contributing.

Funding to Adequate Levels, contains a brief description of current estimates of the funding needs for LF elimination. Further work is needed here, as much of the necessary information is incomplete or out of date.

Governance and Programme Management, describes the current international governance and the process being followed to develop a global but lightweight structure for the future.

² Compiled by Professor D. Molyneux, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Liverpool, U.K.

³ Based on a paper by Dr A. Haddix, Department of International Health in the Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, USA.

Integration with Other Disease Control Programmes, contains contributions from four other disease control programmes (the Onchocerciasis Control Programme/African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control, Intestinal Parasite Control Programmes, Guinea worm Eradication Programme, the Expanded Programme on Immunization) on how they see themselves working with LF elimination efforts.

The Timing, outlines a preliminary and long-term vision for the targets to be reached in five-year intervals for LF elimination to be achieved by the year 2020.

This document has been extensively reviewed by all members of the coalition and was discussed at a partners' meeting in May 1999. Further comments and suggestions are welcome.

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