

# National school based deworming programme marks 10 years

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Kenya is celebrating 10 years of deworming under the National School-Based Deworming Programme (NSBDP), jointly led by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, with technical support from the global non-profit making organisation, Evidence Action.

Under the Programme, children aged 2-14 years, regardless of their enrollment status, are provided with free deworming treatment by teachers at schools.

With 2022 marking the tenth year of deworming, the NSBDP has to date conducted a total of Nine rounds of school-based deworming treatment, reaching up to six million children annually across 27 counties.

Speaking ahead of the National School-Based Deworming Programme 10-year celebration activities, Principal Secretary (PS), Early Learning and Basic Education, at the Ministry of Education, Dr. Julius Jwan, says “Research shows that if deworming is not done, there is up to 25 per cent absenteeism by learners, something which greatly affects their overall performance.”

The National School-Based Deworming Programme is a Kenya Vision 2030 flagship program, which has provided over 52 million treatments to school going children over nine years. After a disruptive Covid year in 2020, the program resumed full-scale operations and dewormed over 6.4 million children in 2021 across 21 counties.

“In addition to us allocating funds for deworming, we are also going further to ensure that all the resources of the government that are directed towards procuring dewormers, go to local manufacturers,” said the Principal Secretary (PS) at the Ministry of Health, Susan Mochache.

This year, the NSBDP aims to achieve deworming across 17 counties and 112 Sub-counties, targeting 5.7 million children.

The Ministry of Health is procuring a record 5.9 million Albendazole tablets for the treatment. Since 2009, the program has consistently treated over Six million children in the targeted age bracket, in both public and private primary schools and Early Childhood Development Centres.

All children in targeted areas, regardless of their enrollment status, are able to receive treatment for free. The medicines are safe, effective, and recommended by the World Health Organization.

“Ensuring that no primary schooling child is lost because of worm infections that pose a serious threat to the health, education and productivity of children remains an urgent challenge that deworming can help solve,” enthused Chrispin Owaga, the Evidence Action, Country Director – Kenya.

The impact of deworming on children goes beyond health and education outcomes. A new landmark study published in 2021 by a team of economists, led by Edward Miguel and Nobel laureate, Michael Kremer, offers new evidence of the long-term benefits of school-based deworming.

According to the study, which followed a group of Kenyan students every five years over a 20-year period, receiving two to three additional years of deworming increased their income by 13 percent and consumption by 14 percent, decades after treatment.

The importance of deworming children cannot be gainsaid, deworming treatment leads to significant weight gains and allows more energy to be focused on child growth and development. A study in Uganda, for example, found that deworming treatment increased child weight by 10 percent for children who received treatment twice per year, and by 5 percent for children who received treatment annually.

School-based mass deworming has also shown to reduce school absenteeism more cost-effectively than alternative ways of boosting school attendance.

In Kenya, school-based mass deworming reduced school absenteeism by 25 percent for those in treatment schools. Furthermore, deworming has spillover effects for untreated school-age and preschool children.

**By Joseph Ng'ang'a**

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