

Where in the world is RTI



INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BIMONTHLY FEBRUARY/MARCH 2008

Starting Up

Measuring Impact in El Salvador

The northern region of El Salvador, where over 53% of the population lives below the poverty line, lags behind the rest of the country on a number of social and economic indicators. Unifying this area with the rest of the country and enabling it to fully participate in El Salvador's growth is a national priority.

In November 2006, the Government of El Salvador (GOES) and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) signed a five-year, anti-poverty agreement (Compact) to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty, in an effort to improve the lives of approximately 850,000 Salvadorans and increase incomes in the region by 20% over the five-year term of the agreement, and by 30% by 2016.

To determine the impact of MCC's program interventions, RTI is working with Social Impact to design and implement impact evaluations of three of the infrastructure components of the El Salvador Compact, namely investments in water and sanitation, electrification, and roads. The evaluations aim to establish a causal relationship between MCC program interventions and observed changes in impact and outcome

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RTI is working in El Salvador to determine the impact of the MCC projects, such as the Connecting Roads Network, which will link rural households to national and regional markets. [Photo: RTI Staff]

Venture Capital Tackles Diseases of the Poor



RTI is helping early-stage global health companies develop and market medical devices adapted to the health needs in poor countries where facilities, like this clinic in Uganda, are under-resourced. [Photo: Godfrey Sikipa]

RTI International has received a three-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support a new strategy for global health investment in collaboration with Commons Capital, a Boston-based socially responsible venture capital firm.

RTI will provide technical and business assistance, for companies that qualify for a Commons Capital investment, to encourage them to develop devices, diagnostics, and information technology solutions appropriately tailored for underserved markets in developing countries.

"This initiative funded by the Gates Foundation will stimulate global health innovation and investment by the private sector. In this model, RTI will form partnerships to bring new resources and technologies to address critical health needs in developing nations," said Doris Rouse, Ph.D., project director at RTI.

RTI will apply its expertise in international development and technology commercialization to generate and implement

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Fourteen Million People Treated in One Year for Debilitating Neglected Tropical Diseases

During 2007—its first year of operation—the Neglected Tropical Disease Control program distributed about 36 million treatments to 14 million people, signaling a real basis for hope that many will escape the ravages of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

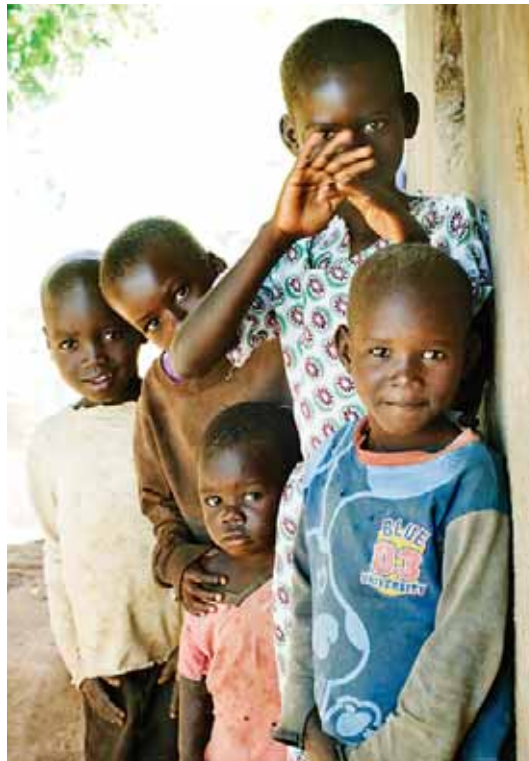
RTI is leading the NTD control program, which will treat more than 40 million people over five years. NTDs, although largely unknown in developed nations, cause severe disabilities, including blindness, reduced mobility, impaired childhood growth, and disfigurement. The economic toll of NTDs includes loss of productivity and poverty. Approximately one billion people—one-sixth of the world's population—suffer from one or more NTDs, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), and the diseases annually cause 415,000 deaths worldwide.

The NTD Control program is the first global effort to support developing countries' own programs to control selected NTDs by scaling up and integrating their existing approaches to include additional populations or diseases. The program is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Scaling Up of Country Programs Yields Impressive Results

The NTD program assists ministries of health in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that have a high prevalence of NTDs, have recognized them as a national priority, and are expanding and integrating their existing disease-specific programs. "We're building on the success of these programs by integrating and scaling up treatment, and through monitoring and evaluation. In this way, the program makes a large, very cost-effective contribution to reduce and potentially eliminate these debilitating diseases," said Jean Shaikh, RTI's NTD program director.

Integration, organization, and dedication have produced stunning results. In 2007, safe and effective drugs for five of the



Children are especially vulnerable to infections from neglected tropical diseases. [Photo: Andrea Peterson]

most prevalent NTDs were distributed in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and Niger, and distribution in Uganda was recently completed. In Mali—in four months—workers mobilized to publicize, train, manage logistics, and administer treatments for five diseases in 24 districts to more than 4.5 million people. And in Ghana, more than 21,000 volunteers and health workers administered medications in 60 districts, treating more than five million people.

Mobilizing for Mass Drug Administration

Medicines valued at more than \$400 million have been generously donated by Merck, GlaxoSmithKline, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Johnson & Johnson, and Pfizer through their ongoing donation programs. Health ministries obtain donated medications from pharmaceutical companies, or RTI assists them with purchases

through the NTD program to reach more at-risk populations.

The program concentrates on mass drug administration (MDA) for the most prevalent NTDs:

- Trachoma—blinding eye infection
- Soil-transmitted helminths (STH)—hookworm, ascaris, trichuris
- Onchocerciasis—river blindness
- Schistosomiasis—snail fever
- Lymphatic filariasis—elephantiasis

NTDs and their treatments share characteristics that support the integration of resources to maximize MDA coverage. In many developing countries, populations are affected by more than three NTDs. Some drugs can treat multiple NTDs and are administered annually over successive years, making integration and cost efficiencies critical in the far-reaching efforts needed to conduct MDA for additional populations and diseases. Participating countries expand and integrate their existing programs' logistical structures for

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Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases (continued)

procurement, shipping, tracking, and distribution on a larger scale. They analyze funding needs and develop work plans and budgets to increase coverage. These mechanisms can be streamlined and reused for ongoing annual MDA campaigns.

Social mobilization prepares the countries' populations for receiving the medicines. Communications through television and radio spots, printed materials, and door-to-door visits inform communities about MDA and the schedule for distributing the medicines. At the same time, a host of health workers and volunteers are trained to administer appropriate dosages of drugs, enter data into log books, and follow up to determine if any adverse effects occurred.

The countries are meeting the challenges to make scaling up work. In Burkina Faso, for instance, all at-risk districts were being treated through the country's existing program for STH, onchocerciasis, and lymphatic filariasis. In 2007, with help from the NTD Control Program, people in 33 additional districts were treated for trachoma with Zithromax®, which was administered, for the first time, to one million people in three districts. More than 3,800 health workers and 28,800 volunteers conducted the MDA.

Overall, participating countries have achieved coverage rates of more than 80% of the population eligible for treatment according to drug dosing protocols.



A volunteer in Uganda uses a dosing pole to determine how much NTD medicine to administer. [Photo: Henrietta Allen, WHO]



Residents of a community in Burkina Faso register for the administration of NTD drugs. Registration ensures compliance and safety. [Photo: Dr. Albis Gabrielli, Schistosomiasis Control Initiative]

Supporting Country Programs

The NTD program supports governments that implement country-wide NTD control efforts through grants to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). RTI administers the grants program, which is based on a transparent and competitive process, described on the program's website.

This year, the program will reach Haiti, Southern Sudan, and Sierra Leone in addition to continuing its work with the original five countries participating in the program. Plans are under way to determine when more countries will be added.

Through its monitoring and evaluation responsibilities, RTI is measuring the NTD program's effectiveness by comparing baseline data from countries' original programs with data collected from post-MDA surveys. RTI is also analyzing participating countries' scale-up processes and will disseminate guidelines for implementation and models for sustaining the integrated control of NTDs.

"The NTD program's innovative approach to integrating the country disease control programs has produced dramatic results," said Barbara Kennedy, RTI vice president of international health. "It's exciting to collaborate with the ministries of health to scale up treatments and see that millions of people may be spared the afflictions of NTDs," she said.

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NTD Control Program website: <http://ntd.rti.org/>

El Salvador (continued)

indicators by comparing the beneficiaries of the program to a comparison group.

The work is divided into three phases. In the first phase, the impact evaluation team will work with MCC staff; FOMILENIO, which is the El Salvador government agency responsible for implementation of the Compact; and other implementing entities to develop an evaluation design and an implementation plan. Once these are approved, the team will monitor and advise the development and implementation of Compact-funded data collection, and in the last phase it will implement the evaluations and document relevant findings.

Specific activities that RTI is helping to evaluate include improving access to potable water systems for 90,000 people and improved sanitation services for more than 50,000. The MCC funding is targeted to enable the extension of electricity coverage from 70% to at least 97% in the Northern Zone, benefiting 235,000 individuals. Project Manager Christine Poulos says, “RTI’s work will assist FOMILENIO and the MCC to consistently monitor and evaluate its progress and ultimately to determine if these targets are reached as a result of the GOES’s efforts. In addition, it will help the MCC to identify effective interventions, which could be scaled up and replicated in future programs.”

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Where in the World Is RTI is a bimonthly publication of RTI’s International Development Group (IDG). This publication is intended to inform clients and partner organizations about RTI’s global activities and research areas. RTI is dedicated to improving the human condition in developing and emerging countries. RTI has worked for over 40 years in 140 countries around the world. We offer a broad range of policy support, applied research and analysis, and other technical expertise in strategic planning, institutional development, and training. Our expertise is multisectoral and spans the fields of education, health, environment and natural resources, governance, finance, and information and communication technology.

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Venture Capital (continued)

sustainable business strategies that address the unique needs of global health product and market development, ensuring that lifesaving technologies are made affordable and accessible in resource-limited countries.

Working closely with companies, RTI will define product characteristics, assess market demand, prepare regulatory strategies for target markets, assess economic and health impact of technology, identify strategic partners for product development and commercialization, and map sales and distribution channels.

Through this nonprofit initiative, known as Venture Investment Technical Assistance (VITA), RTI will provide technical and business assistance to companies while Commons Capital will develop new investment strategies based on traditional and social venture capital principles.

“We believe that venture capital offers a proven engine for innovation that can be used to help solve major global health problems,” said Elizabeth Bailey, a principal at Commons Capital. “Very little has been done to harness the venture capital model for the benefit of health care in the developing world, and we’re excited to be pioneering this new effort alongside RTI.”

VITA will focus, in part, on working with one of Commons Capital’s portfolio companies, Claros Diagnostics, a “point-of-care diagnostics” company committed to developing products with direct application to infectious diseases in the developing world.

The law firm of Sidley Austin LLP will provide pro bono legal work for the project, and RTI will also partner with JSI Research and Training Institute, a global leader in the area of supply chain management for essential health products.

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