



Press Release

US\$25 Million Grant from the World Bank to Combat Schistosomiasis in Yemen

The Minister of Public Health and Population, Dr. Abdulkareem Rasae, the Governor of Hajah, Mr. Fareed Mujawer, the WHO Regional Director Dr. Hussein Al-Gazaery and the World Bank Country Manger, Mr. Benson Ateng launched December 27, 2009 the Schistosomiasis Control Campaign in Hajah governorate. The campaign, which will be conducted between 27-30 of December in three pilot governorates; Sana'a, Hajah and Dhamar and targeting more than 800.000 people, is organized by the Ministry of Public Health and implemented by the World Bank-funded Schistosomiasis Project, in partnership with WHO.

During the launching of the campaign, Mr. Ateng thanked the Health Minister for his outstanding leadership in guiding the preparation of the Schistosomiasis Project along with the Ministry key staff and Project team for their distinguished efforts and commitment while preparing this vital project.

In addition, Mr. Ateng has extended appreciation to the support provided by some partners agencies such as the WHO represented by Dr. Hussein Al-Gazaery, the Regional Director of WHO EMRO, Dr. Gholam Popal, WHO Representative for Yemen and the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative team who provided technical support to the project.

"This project represents an excellent opportunity for Yemen to control the morbidity due to Schistosomiasis and decrease the number of people affected by the disease and hopefully would lead to the disappearance of Schistosomiasis as a public health problem in Yemen. We hope that the Bank's financial support for the Schistosomiasis Control Project, amounting to US\$25 million, will support the nation-wide implementation of campaigns and ensure the availability of drugs to protect individuals from the risk of developing Schistosomiasis." Said Mr. Ateng.

From his part, Dr. Rasae praised the World Bank support provided to health sector in Yemen in general and said *"Unlike previous campaigns, this pilot campaign, which is the first activity organized by the Schistosomiasis project funded by the World Bank, will cover schools and health centres in three governorates using micro-planning methodology to reach remote areas students and children between 6-18 years old."* He added that next campaigns would provide treatment and protection against Schistosomiasis to all community members of the target areas.

Dr. Abdul-Hakim AlKohlany, the General Director of Disease Control and Surveillance in the Public Health & Population Ministry stated that the pilot campaign comes within the Ministry new strategy to eradicate Schistosomiasis through mass community treatment for individuals above 6 years old.

The WHO speech was delivered by the regional director, Dr. Al-Gazaery who referred to the role of WHO in eradicating serious diseases in Yemen like smallpox and plague and stressed on the need for more cooperation between all partners, community and individuals to fight Schistosomiasis. *"Fighting this serious disease is the responsibility of all and community participation is key to implement the campaigns and there would be economic values and interests that Yemen may gain if is this disease put to an end."* Dr. Al-Gazaery stated.

It is worth mentioning that the Schistosomiasis project is one of a number of projects the World Bank is supporting in the health sector in Yemen. *"Currently, the Bank is supporting the implementation of the Safe Motherhood Project, amounting to USD6.0 million. Another project under preparation, Health and Population Project, amounting to USD28 million, is expected to contribute to the acceleration of the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 4 & 5 that is, reduction in childhood mortality and improvement of maternal health, respectively."* The World Bank Country Manager concluded.

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