INTRODUCTION

Soil transmitted helminthiases: Affecting nearly one billion people globally, soil-transmitted helminthiases (STH) is the most common parasitic infection.

WHO 2020 goal: To eliminate STH among preschool-age children (aged 1-4 years) and school-aged children (aged 5-14 years) as a public health problem.

National Action Plan (NAP): Development of NAP for STH-endemic countries is a 2015 milestone of the WHO strategic plan for STH control. A NAP is a detailed plan outlining actions needed to reach one or more goals.

WHO 2015 milestones:
- 100% of STH-endemic countries develop NAPs for NTD control by 2015
- 100% of STH-endemic countries develop national policies for STH control involving intersectoral collaboration.

OBJECTIVE

To our knowledge, the degree to which these 2015 milestones have been achieved has not been evaluated. NAPs were collected and analyzed to assess progress toward the milestones.

METHODS

Plan survey: Requests were made of national NTD programs, WHO, and implementing partners for current, draft, or expired NAPs for NTD or STH control between February and July 2015.

Plan availability: Each STH-endemic country was categorized as:
- NAP Available: Plan obtained in our survey.
- NAP Unavailable: Plan was not obtained in survey but identified by WHO to have developed one.
- No NAP: Identified by WHO to have not developed a plan yet.

Qualitative Analysis Terms: Available NAPs were reviewed to assess three core components:
- Strategic plan: identifying the goal and target populations.
- Operational plan: identifying intervention activities, responsible entities, timeline, and budgeting.
- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan: identifying M&E frameworks and program indicators.

RESULTS

National Action Plans and STH-endemic countries: WHO reported that 79 of 102 (77%) countries requiring PC for STH in 2014 had NAPs for NTD or STH control. Of these, we were able to collect NAPs from 41 (52%) countries; 38 (62%) countries had an unavailable plan. Of the 41 NAPs collected, 21 (51%) were outdated, 12 (28%) were current, and 8 (20%) listed no end year.

DISCUSSION

Limitations: Our analysis is limited by difficulty in collecting NAPs. There are up to 15 countries that have NAPs that we were not able to collect and analyze. Of the 41 NAPs we were able to collect 29 (70%) were outdated or did not include an end year.

Plans need to be updated:
- Of the 102 STH-endemic countries, 90 (88%) either have no plan, an outdated plan, or a plan we were unable to collect.
- The current WHO strategy focuses on prioritizing 10 countries which have more than two thirds of the at-risk population; however, only four of these countries have current plans.

WHO strategic plan and country strategic plan misalignment:
- Less than half of the countries specified a goal in alignment with WHO, while others focused on coverage targets.
- Over one-third of the countries failed to identify preschool-age children as a target population.

Operational and M&E components of NAPs need improvement:
- While all the plans mention at least one of the measures of intersectoral collaboration, few specified roles or activities to collaborate across sectors.
- Although 36 (88%) plans have an M&E plan existing or in development, 8 (20%) did not list any STH program indicators.