Soil-transmitted helminths (STH) are among the most common infections worldwide and severely affect the poorest and most deprived communities. Chronic STH infestations are a public health problem as they can cause anaemia, malnutrition, growth faltering, and impaired cognitive development. India bears a significantly high burden of STH infections as compared to any other country. WHO estimates that 241 million children, representing 68% of the children between the ages of 1 and 14, are at risk of parasitic intestinal worms in India. Unfortunately, few States in the country have consistently and effectively prioritized deworming interventions thereby leading to poor coverage across India.

Against this backdrop, Government of India adopted a fixed day strategy as National Deworming Day and the same was launched in February, 2015 across 11 States. The National Deworming Day (NDD) has resulted in administration of deworming drug to more than 89 million children across 11 States in the country. This has emerged as the world's largest public health campaign for treatment of intestinal parasitic worms. While the average national coverage was more than 85%, the coverage touched 95% in places such as Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

After the unprecedented success of National Deworming Day in February, 2015, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare is planning to observe a National Deworming Day in February, 2016 at a pan India level to provide Albendazole to all children of age 1-19 years through the network of schools and anganwadi centres on a single day across all States/UTs.

In this regard, it is requested that all States/UTs may align their deworming intervention activities with the National Deworming Day to bring about uniformity and enhance the coverage all over the country. The States/UTs are advised to initiate necessary steps in terms of procuring drugs, training health workers, taking up IEC activities etc., so as to make the NDD a success. National Deworming Day guidelines and other material will be soon forwarded to you.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr. Rakesh Kumar)

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