

The Worm Project

Combating World Hunger Through Parasite Removal

Newsletter

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My experience in Honduras

By Jeff Hollenbach, volunteer and member of Board of Directors for The Worm Project

I have been an enthusiastic supporter of The Worm Project for some time now. I love the idea that one deworming pill costing just two cents can make a critical difference in the health of a child. The Worm Project does an amazing job of getting help to the beautiful children of the world who have little hope if they are not properly dewormed. It is for that reason that I was so blessed to go on a mission trip with Healthy Niños Honduras this past June to experience the reality of the need first hand. This trip was impactful to me in many ways. It was a privilege to actually help distribute deworming medication to children and adults.



Their smiles and gracious attitudes indicated to me that they understood the importance of what they were doing. My ability to communicate in Spanish is weak at best, however with every pill I distributed I said either “Jesus te ama” or “Dios te bendiga” and generally they seemed to appreciate that (they also could have been smiling at my poor Spanish). Being part of that medical team ministry in the high mountains and remote villages of Honduras are moments I will never forget. I also had the opportunity to travel to some of the high mountain Honduran homes and help install concrete

floors. During that labor-intensive project, I noticed one of the children standing around and watching these “gringos” who came to help them. I approached this



beautiful 4 year old girl named Daniella and gave her a bouncy red rubber ball. Her eyes lit up and she giggled often as we threw the ball

back and forth to each other. I could not help thinking at that moment about our granddaughters back home and consider how differently my granddaughters would experience life compared to Daniella’s. Would she have clean water, nutritious food, be worm-free, and enjoy a safe and healthy environment in which to grow? What will life look like for her. I prayed for the Lord’s richest blessing on her life as we threw the ball back and forth.

During our week long trip I was impressed with the courage, strength of character, joy and enthusiasm that I could see in our Honduran friends. They seemed to have the ability to be less concerned with the things of life than they were with meaningful relationships and doing whatever they could to bless others. There is no doubt they gave more to me than I gave to them. My hope is that through the important ministry of The Worm Project we can do our part, as small as it might be on the big scale, to help eradicate the life-threatening issue of intestinal parasites and give children like Daniella an opportunity to experience life the way God intended it for her.

Note: The Worm Project donated 500,000 deworming tablets to Honduras earlier this year for use by Healthy Niños Honduras and other partners dedicated to improving the health of the people there.

Haitian Partners Crusade Against Worms

By Vitamin Angels

Julie was quiet and serious. Dressed in a demure white collared shirt, she blended in with the group of women standing in front of us. She gently swayed with the music and mouthed the words of the welcome song the group performed in Haitian Creole. While we didn't understand the words, the handwashing motions they used implied they were singing about hygiene.



Photo © Vitamin Angels/Marie Arago

Suddenly, Julie sprang to life. She danced around, alternately clutching her stomach and bottom while squealing and wiggling vigorously. There was little doubt about what she was imitating-- a terrible case of worms! The crowd erupted in laughter. When her performance ended, she quietly returned to the chorus line, earnest as ever. As the song finished, mothers from the audience rushed to form a line in front of the table where deworming tablets and vitamin A were being administered to all children under five.

Regular deworming is critical to reducing the burden of soil-transmitted helminth (STH) infections affecting children in countries like Haiti. Equally important in this crusade against intestinal worms is the education that accompanies the tablets. Julie is part of a group of mothers and grandmothers working with the locally-assigned Health Agents to educate families in their community about sanitation, water, and nutrition. Throughout our week in Haiti, we saw countless songs and skits about the importance of good hygiene practices — handwashing,



Photo © Vitamin Angels/Sophia Billikopf

drinking clean water, eating healthy foods, and visiting the doctor when sick. Every deworming and vitamin A distribution we visited started with this creative way of transmitting information. They use comedy, and energetic drum beats to grab people's attention and to make these unpleasant and sometimes awkward topics more accessible. And it's working! Many of the mothers we spoke with afterward were able to recite the information they had learned. Local volunteers are on the frontline of the fight against parasitic infections and malnutrition. They are critical in mobilizing communities for distributions and educational talks, ensuring that every family in the area, no matter how remote, receives access to deworming tablets and information.



Photo © Vitamin Angels/Marie Arago

Thanks to The Worm Project, and local field partners, we were able to reach 15,500 children in and around Jeremie, Haiti with life-changing albendazole just last year; and thanks to volunteers like Julie, families are educated and empowered to take control of their families' health and wellbeing!

Medicine Transforms Health of Indonesian Child

By Elysia Cook

Photos © Vitamin Angels / Matt Dayka ID 16



One, two, three, four... Yuliana, a young mother in Indonesia, counted the worms to thirty-five.

The health workers had forewarned her about the worms, noting the possibility that they may exit in her two-year-old daughter's stool once she took the deworming tablet provided by Vitamin Angels. But on that day, nothing could have prepared any mother for the shock.

Only moments before, the worms had been inside of Ferlinda, her littlest child, who her mother recalled was "very uncomfortable" up until that point. She had been crying a lot, Yuliana shared; it was Ferlinda's only way of expressing the discomfort she experienced from the soil-transmitted helminths (STH or intestinal parasites) that resided in her intestines.

Combined with her other ailments – frequent fevers, cough and a cleft lip – the effects of the worms only aggravated the toddler's vulnerable condition.

"She never wanted to eat. She would eat some rice, but was very uninterested overall," Yuliana said.



Luckily, the defining moment – startling as it was – signified a turning point for the better. Once Ferlinda received deworming treatment and passed the parasites from her small body, her health drastically improved.

"She used to have appetite problems, but now she is better," Yuliana proudly told us. "She is more cheerful."

Ferlinda's renewed desire to eat was a milestone, considering that Yuliana already goes to great lengths to put nutritious meals on the table. At only 27, she bears the sole responsibility of raising three of her daughters – a challenge that is both rewarding and taxing. A year and a half earlier, her husband passed away from throat cancer, suddenly leaving Yuliana a widow and single mother.

Life without her husband is often difficult, she admitted. "Everything we need is on me. Every problem, I have to deal with myself," she said.



Since then, she's taken on the dual role of caregiver and provider for her household, but her ability to adapt doesn't quell the pressure to provide.

A common meal, she shared, consists of rice and whatever vegetable is available; she also incorporates cassava or sweet potato leaves when they're at hand.

The limited supply of food is enough to sustain her and her little ones, but fails to provide the adequate nutrients her daughters need to reach their full potential.



And while they have access to a river for water, the lack of water treatment resources means that the water used for drinking and cooking may be contaminated. It is highly possible that this is how Ferlinda contracted the parasites.

With the vitamins provided by our field partner in Indonesia, though, Yuliana has some peace of mind that her daughters are better protected against parasitic infections and malnutrition.

Now, she can dedicate more of her time and energy to watching her girls grow up healthy and strong, and to making their lives more fruitful than her own.

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