

# TRACHOMA MATTERS

Take A Closer Look



[www.trachoma.org](http://www.trachoma.org)

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## In this Issue

Welcome to Trachoma Matters, the e-newsletter of the International Trachoma Initiative. Founded in 1998 by The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and Pfizer Inc, the [International Trachoma Initiative](#) is dedicated to the elimination of blinding trachoma, an infectious eye disease that plagues communities in the developing world with limited access to water and sanitation. Trachoma is the world's leading cause of preventable blindness.

### [Morocco Achieves Intervention Goals](#)

### [Mali Public-Private Partnership](#)

### [USAID Funds NTDs Collaboration](#)

### [ITI Partners in NTDs Network](#)

## FROM THE FIELD

### Morocco Achieves Intervention Goals in Trachoma Control Campaign



## Quick Links

### [Upcoming Conferences](#)

### [Neglected Tropical Diseases Coalition](#)

### [ITI Website](#)

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On November 17-18, 2006, H.M. the King of Morocco, Mohammed VI, will give his patronage to a two-day celebration to announce his nation's success as the first country to complete the campaign for trachoma control ending the mass administration of antibiotics in the endemic areas and clearing the backlog of trichiasis surgeries in 2005. Surgery becomes necessary when trachoma reaches the advanced stage, called trichiasis, in which the eyelashes turn inward and repeatedly scratch the cornea, ultimately resulting in blindness.

Morocco has reached the intervention targets set by the World Health Organization (WHO) using the [SAFE strategy](#) (Surgery, Antibiotics, Facial Cleanliness, Environmental improvement), a comprehensive approach that employs rehabilitative, curative and preventive interventions. In Morocco, the disease burden has fallen to less than 5% prevalence of active disease in children 1-9 years old and less than 0.1% trichiasis in adults over the age of 15 at the district level. Next, Morocco will conduct disease surveillance plan to ensure that the infection levels remain within the World Health Organization's (WHO) guidelines. Once this is complete, Morocco will apply for certification from the WHO that blinding trachoma has been eliminated as a public health problem from the country. To mark this accomplishment in November 2006, the Ministry of Health will hold a press conference, give awards to various districts for their work, and host a dinner celebration.

### Mauritanian Foundation Partners with Mali Government in Trachoma Control Program



Trachoma is hyper-endemic in Mali, which has been recognized as a priority country by the

Global Alliance for the Elimination of Trachoma by 2020 (GET 2020), an initiative of the WHO. The government of Mali started trachoma control in 2000 and allocated important funds to implement the SAFE strategy. The government and its partners, including the International Trachoma Initiative (ITI), are now collaborating in the implementation of the Five-Year National Plan for Trachoma Control.

Recently the government of Mali has been aided in its trachoma control campaign by the generous support of the [Fondation Bouamatou](#) through ITI. Begun in 1998 in Mauritania by Mohamed Bouamatou, Fondation Bouamatou is a charitable organization dedicated to preventing blindness in some of Africa's poorest communities. The organization founded the only ophthalmic hospital in Mauritania in 2001, where it provides state-of-the-art medical and specialized eye care at no charge to the poor. In 2003, the Fondation Bouamatou partnered with the government of Mauritania and ITI to launch that country's national trachoma control program. The success of the Mauritania trachoma program led the foundation to expand its work to Mali in 2005 and 2006 with donations totaling over U.S.\$200,000 to ITI. With the support of the Fondation Bouamatou, Mali is making great strides towards eliminating blinding trachoma.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### ITI Part of USAID-funded Collaboration to Treat Neglected Tropical Diseases



ITI, the global leader in the fight against trachoma, has joined a \$100 million, collaborative effort, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), that is aimed at reducing the impacts of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) in developing nations. During this campaign, 40 million people will be treated annually for five years for seven debilitating NTDs, including trachoma. Globally, NTDs cause the loss of 56.6 million life-years to death and disability (DALYs) as compared to malaria, which results in 46.5 million lost life-years, and tuberculosis, which results in 34.7 million lost life-years.

RTI International has been selected by USAID to lead a team comprised of ITI, the Sabin Vaccine Institute (SVI), Liverpool Associates in Tropical Health and the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (SCI) at Imperial College London. The USAID-funded program will focus on seven of the most prevalent neglected tropical diseases trachoma, soil-transmitted helminths (hookworm, ascaris, trichuriasis), onchocerciasis (river blindness), schistosomiasis (snail fever) and lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis). These diseases cause severe disabilities such as blindness, reduced mobility, impaired childhood growth and intellectual development, and severe disfigurements.

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### ITI One of Founding Members of GNNTDC



Trachoma control programs will receive increased advocacy attention and integration opportunities within the newly formed network called the [Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases Control](#) (GNNTDC). GNNTDC will operate as a partnership to raise the profile of neglected diseases and to stimulate a paradigm shift in disease control efforts.

GNNTDC will include several major public-private partnerships, which are focused on

single diseases. They will work together in collaboration with the WHO to design an integrated drug administration platform that addresses seven NTDs - trachoma, soil-transmitted helminths (hookworm, ascaris, trichuris), onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis and lymphatic filariasis.

GNNTDC was founded by SVI, SCI, ITI, the Lymphatic Filariasis Support Centre at Liverpool (LLFSC) and the Earth Institute at Columbia University. Its aim is to contribute to achieving the [U.N. Millennium Development Goals](#) by eliminating or controlling the NTDs through integrated, mass drug delivery programs. This partnership was formalized by the Clinton Global Initiative and was introduced at the [Rapid Impact: Integrating the Neglected Tropical Diseases with Malaria and HIV/AIDS Control](#) conference sponsored by George Washington University in Washington, D.C., October 26-27, 2006.

**For more information on ITI's work please visit our website: [www.trachoma.org](http://www.trachoma.org)**

The International Trachoma Initiative is a charitable organization exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(a) of the US Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501(c)(3). Donations to ITI are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.