

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

PRESSTATEMENT

Uganda Interrupts the Transmission of River blindness (Onchocerciasis) in the Wambabya-Rwamarongo and Kashoya-Kitomi foci; Targets Nationwide Elimination

8th August 2013

Uganda has moved closer to its goal of eliminating onchocerciasis (river blindness) nationwide by 2020. The sixth Uganda Onchocerciasis Elimination Expert Advisory Committee (UOE-EAC), composed of national and international experts, has today (8 August 2013) recommended stopping ivermectin treatment for river blindness (onchocerciasis) in 2 more foci namely: Wambabya-Rwamarongo (Hoima District) and Kashoya-Kitomi (Buhweju, Kamwenge, Ibanda and Rubirizi districts). However, the latter pending satisfactory completion of confirmatory laboratory tests currently underway.

The recommendation to stop ivermectin treatment for onchocerciasis will be sent to the National Certification Committee (NCC) of the Ministry of Health seeking for approval before Post Treatment Surveillance (PTS). With NCC approval, treatment with ivermectin (Mectizan®, donated by the US Company Merck) would be discontinued in the approved areas in the year 2014. That means transmission will have been eliminated in 8 foci of river blindness in Uganda. Including the newly announced areas, more than 1,524,568 Ugandans are now no longer at risk of getting the disease. Health workers will

a Neglected Tropical Disease and can

in lesions, eyesight impairment, and eventually if not treated lead to

continues to demonstrate that onchocerciasis elimination is possible in Africa. It was made in February and December 2012 highlighting the first six Ugandan foci to eliminate the disease. This success also means that about 3,000,000 ivermectin tablets will not be needed for these foci and they can begin a three

year post