

## Kyrgyzstan De-worming Campaign Aims to Promote the Health and Intellectual Development of Impoverished Children

At the request of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Health (MOH) the RVF has agreed to assist in conducting a mass campaign against soil-transmitted helminthes among the general population, with a special focus on school-aged children. The first phase of the campaign, launched in April 2008, covered all communities in the Batken region, one of the poorest regions in a country suffering from widespread poverty. Over 400,000 children and adults were treated with the drug albendazole, proven to be safe, highly effective, and inexpensive. The goal of the school-based campaign, which proceeded according to WHO guidelines, is to decrease the infestation level of helminthes through direct treatment and educational activities highlighting both the behavioral risk factors of infestation and effective sanitary-hygienic practices.



Surveys conducted by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Health (MoH) in cooperation with UNICEF, Swiss Red Cross, and the Swiss Tropical Institute in 2007 indicate that nearly 3 out of 4 children were infected with one or more intestinal parasites.

School children who received deworming medication in Batken Oblast, Kyrgyzstan

The main causes of infestation are the following

- Contamination of water sources with raw sewage
- Low living standards
- Contamination of food supplies with the helminthes eggs due to improper preparation and storage of food materials
- Lack of sanitation education

Intestinal worms can cause children to suffer from:

- learning problems & poor school attendance
- reduced growth rates
- malnutrition
- anemia

830,000 tablets of albendazole were provided by RVF to treat over 400,000 individuals against helminthes. The RVF provides the drug albendazole in a special odor-free, peppermint-flavored chewable tablet that kids like. RVF also contributed to social mobilization and capacity building

of health staff through development of video clips and conducting training for physicians and laboratory assistants.

The RVF is committed to supporting the MoH of Kyrgyzstan in its efforts to expand the deworming campaign to all regions of the country. With the ongoing support of the RVF and the other international partners working to improve children's health, the MoH will soon be in a position to offer treatment and prophylactic educational instruction to all school children in the country.