



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



SUCCESS STORY

Making an Impact: Treating and Preventing Lymphatic Filariasis in Niger



A man in Niger received corrective surgery to treat LF.

**Picture: Anna Phillips,
Schistosomiasis Control Initiative**

USAID support for NTD control in Niger is provided through a grant to the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative, Imperial College, London as part of the NTD Control Program led by RTI International under Cooperative Agreement No. GHS-A-00-00006-00. The Program currently supports national NTD control programs in 12 countries—Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Haiti, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Southern Sudan, Togo, and Uganda. For more information, go to our website at <http://ntd.rti.org>.

Lymphatic filariasis (LF), also known as “elephantiasis,” is one of the leading parasitic diseases causing disability in Niger, with over 70% of the population at risk. LF is caused by a worm that lodges itself inside the human lymphatic system, which can result in gross enlargement of the legs and male genitalia caused by accumulation of lymphatic fluid.

With support provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) Control Program, the Niger Ministry of Health provided over 5 million people in Niger with medication to treat and prevent LF.

Supplementing the drug administration, Niger’s national NTD control program provides simple corrective surgery of the male genitalia. Lasting only 20 minutes under local anesthetic, the procedure drains fluid collection caused by LF. In 2007, a private donor from Arizona, Allan Lewis, donated US\$200,000 to organize surgical camps for those affected by LF. In addition, Elly Varvarina, a UK school student, raised £1,000 to pay for washing kits to reduce swelling and infection in elephantiasis sufferers.

Moussa Hassane suffered from LF for years, but received surgery in February 2009. He explained that the surgery was a life changing experience: “For the last couple of years I have not been able to work in my fields as I have been unable to walk properly. This has caused my family to suffer, as we have not been able to farm the crops. I was ashamed to go to the doctor, as I didn’t understand why it was happening to me. Then one day the health worker called us all together to explain about the disease and that they could heal us for free. I couldn’t believe how lucky I was when I came to the hospital, and in just a short time, the problem had disappeared. My wife will be so happy.”

Niger’s NTD control program aims to eliminate LF and the long-term impact on the sufferers of this disease in Niger.