

# Regional Program for the Elimination of Onchocerciasis

## REGIONAL

SECTOR: Health

PROJECT NAME: Regional Program for the Elimination of Onchocerciasis (River Blindness)  
(ATN/TF/SF-4610-RG)

TOTAL COST: \$18.6 million

FINANCING:

IDB	\$ 4.0 million	
OTHER	\$14.6 million	(Ministries of Health in six countries in the region, \$12.1 million; River Blindness Foundation and non-governmental organizations, \$2.5 million)

DATE OF APPROVAL: July 27, 1994

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: The objective of this non-reimbursable technical cooperation is to eliminate onchocerciasis (river blindness) as a public health menace threatening four million people in the Americas. This objective will be accomplished by implementing effective, safe and locally sustainable programs for the distribution of the drug, ivermectin (Mectizan), in

all endemic communities, within the framework of a coordinated regional strategy. The beneficiaries of the program will be: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Venezuela.

Onchocerciasis is a disease which causes intense itching, disfiguring skin conditions and, for about half of those stricken in the most dangerous areas, eventual blindness.

The specific objectives of the program are to:

- (a) train national specialists, community-based volunteers and local health authorities;
- (b) establish a standardized health management information system that will provide a common data base, facilitate evaluation and quality assurance, as well as enhance the overall primary health care infrastructure;
- (c) develop a computerized monitoring program for the improvement of information systems and support epidemiological surveillance; and
- (d) establish a field research network among the affected countries to stimulate operational research activities leading to improved program implementation and sustainability.

This program provides financial, technical and management support to assist national onchocerciasis elimination plans within the context of a regional elimination strategy. The Bank financing will provide technical expertise and manpower, training and equipment to strengthen and standardize programmatic and operational research components that are common to all six countries and essential to a regional elimination strategy.

#### CONSULTANTS:

The Onchocerciasis Elimination Program in the Americas will hire four individual consultants for 192 staff- months of long-term services and an additional 96 staff- months of short-term consultants. These include an expert technical advisor (team coordinator). The activities to be carried out include:

- (a) epidemiology;
- (b) design of a health

management information system; (c) design of a geographic information system (census/mapping); (d) behavioral studies (knowledge, attitude and practices); (e) health education development; (f) training; and (g) technical evaluation.

**GOODS & EQUIPMENT:**

The project requires a large quantity of equipment and supplies for a total of \$932,000. The equipment to be acquired includes: scientific, laboratory, computer and transport equipment (motorcycles, jeeps, canoes, glass bottom boats and outboard motors). Ivermectin will be donated by Merck and Co., Inc. for the equivalent up to \$18 million and will provide 4 million treatments over five years.

**CIVIL WORKS:**

Not applicable.

**EXECUTING AGENCIES:**

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