

# Guinea Worm Eradication Program

THE  
CARTER CENTER



The Carter Center leads the international campaign to eradicate Guinea worm disease, meaning the disease will no longer exist. Guinea worm disease is poised to become the second human disease in history to be eradicated, following smallpox.

## ABOUT THE CARTER CENTER

A nongovernmental organization, The Carter Center has helped to improve life for people in more than 80 countries by resolving conflicts, advancing human rights, preventing diseases, and improving mental health care.

## WHAT IS GUINEA WORM DISEASE?



Guinea worm disease (dracunculiasis) is a **parasitic infection** caused by a worm called *Dracunculus medinensis*. It is contracted when people drink water contaminated with tiny water fleas that carry Guinea worm larvae or eat raw aquatic animals temporarily harboring larvae. Inside a person's body about a year later, the adult Guinea worm, now up to 1 meter long, creates a painful lesion in the skin and slowly emerges. Sufferers may seek relief from the burning pain by immersing their limbs in water; this stimulates the worm to release its larvae into the water and renew the cycle of infection.



Guinea worm disease can **incapacitate sufferers for extended periods of time**, preventing them from caring for themselves, working, growing food for their families, or attending school.

## HOW WIDESPREAD IS THE DISEASE?



In 1986, the disease afflicted an estimated 3.5 million people a year in 21 countries in Africa and Asia. Today, the incidence of Guinea worm has been reduced by more than **99.99%** to just **27 cases in 2020** in remote locations in six countries: Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, and South Sudan. Additionally, 2,001 infections in animals—mainly domestic dogs in Chad—were reported in 2020.



A South Sudanese child practices using a pipe water filter.

*The Carter Center is a leader in the elimination and eradication of neglected tropical diseases.*

## OUR STRATEGY



In the absence of a curative medicine or vaccine, Guinea worm disease eradication is based on interrupting the worm's life cycle through changed human behavior. The Carter Center works with health ministries and communities to teach people to **filter all drinking water** and keep anyone with an emerging worm from **entering water sources**.



Since 1986, the Center and its partners have provided millions of personal and household **water filters** to protect people from swallowing the larvae-carrying fleas. Tethering dogs proactively and preventing them from eating raw fish entrails that may contain Guinea worm larvae have reduced infections in animals. The World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are key partners in the eradication campaign, which is made possible by a dedicated set of organizations, donors, the affected countries, and frontline health workers.

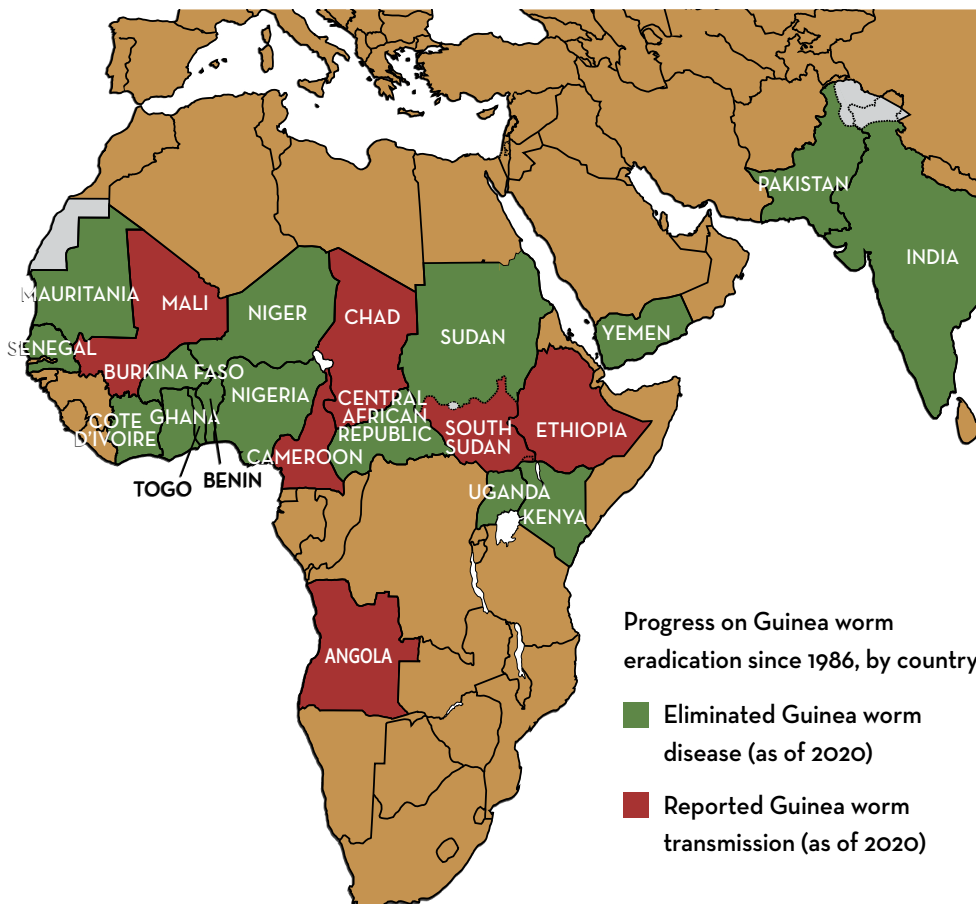


Eradication can be certified only when surveillance can be carried out in all areas to show transmission has been interrupted in humans and animals. Parts of some affected countries are inaccessible to the program because of internal armed conflict. Resolution of these conflicts is key to eradication.



Long and threadlike, Guinea worms often appear in a person's legs and feet.

## WHERE GUINEA WORM DISEASE IS FOUND



## RESULTS AND IMPACT

**99.99%**  
reduction in cases since 1986

**3.5 million** cases in 1986  
↳ **27** cases in 2020

**21** affected countries in 1986  
↳ **6** in 2020

**80 million+**  
cases averted

**Millions**  
of water filters distributed

**100,000+**  
community-based health workers trained