

Morocco
A Brighter Future in Sight





With thanks to Dr. Hank McKinnell *Chairman of Pfizer Inc*

“The work against trachoma in Morocco has been a model for other nations and has shown how committed leaders can galvanize a wide range of partners towards a worthy goal. For thousands of years, trachoma seemed unbeatable. Private companies could not beat it; governments could not beat it; and international agencies could not beat it. No single group could beat this epidemic on their own. What Morocco has proven, though, is that strong partnerships among committed partners ultimately can defeat this disease.”

— Dr. McKinnell stressing the pivotal role of partnerships at the November 2006 gathering to celebrate the success of Morocco in achieving the national Ultimate Intervention Goals (UIGs).



and Our Partners

November 2006: Residents in the formerly trachoma endemic village, Afra Labraber, greet Dr. Hussein Gezairy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean (pictured above) and other partners who worked together for this success.

Ministry of Health

Ministry of National Education

Drinking Water Board

Hassan II Ophthalmology Foundation

Moroccan Red Crescent

World Health Organization

Pfizer Inc

Helen Keller International



There is hope.

The recent success of the Moroccan trachoma control program offers promise that the global elimination of blinding trachoma is indeed within sight. Some 84 million people worldwide suffer from eye infections caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*, which can result in blindness when left untreated. Today, there are 8 million people who are visually impaired because of untreated trachoma infections. Although there are effective prevention and treatment methods, trachoma persists today in marginalized communities in the developing world with limited access to water and sanitation. Children are the

“The fight against blinding trachoma in Morocco has transformed lives and allowed for socio-economic development among the rural poor. At its basic level, trachoma control has targeted and improved behavior, personal hygiene, education, and environmental and sanitation conditions throughout at-risk communities. This represents the most rapid elimination of blindness due to trachoma in a single country in history.”

— Dr. Jacob Kumaresan, President
International of Trachoma Initiative

most susceptible to infection but often the effects are not felt until adulthood. Untreated, repeated trachoma infections can blind adults in their prime years and hinder their ability to care for themselves and their families. Women, traditionally the caretakers of the home, are three times more likely than men to be blinded by the disease. Without intervention, trachoma keeps families shackled within a cycle of poverty, as the disease and its long-term effects are passed from one generation to the next. Globally, the disease results in an estimated US \$2.9 billion in lost productivity per year. The recent success of the Moroccan trachoma control program offers promise that the global elimination of blinding trachoma is within reach.



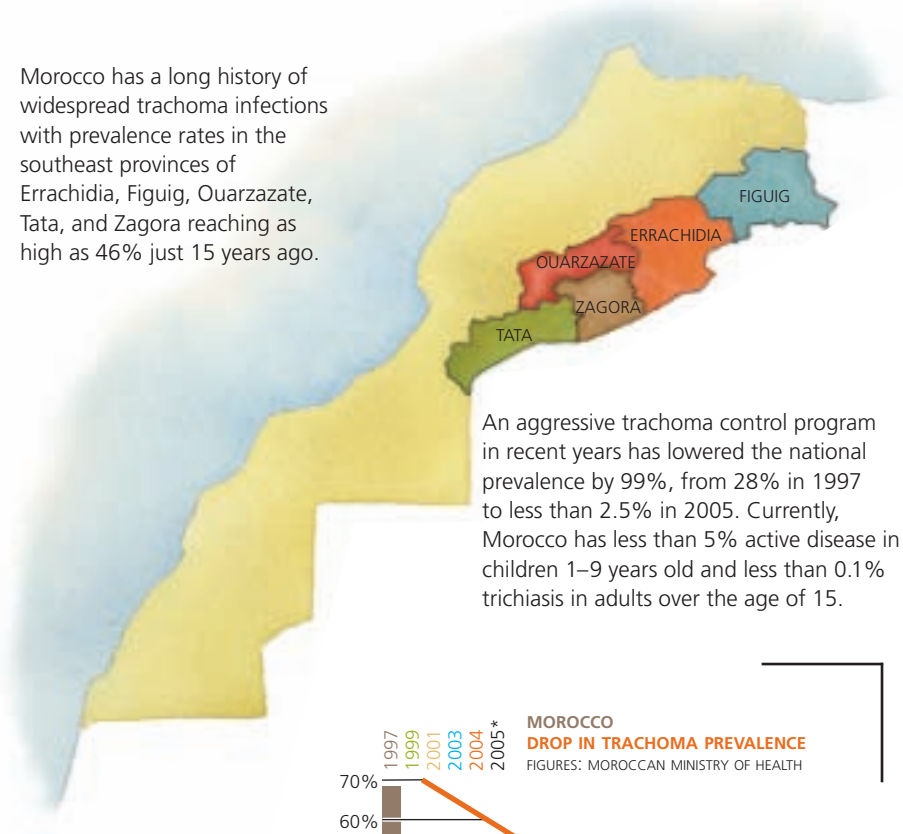
Ultimate Intervention Goals (UIGs)

Morocco has reached the national Ultimate Intervention Goals for the elimination of blinding trachoma by completing the mass treatment with antibiotics and clearing the backlog of trichiasis surgeries in the endemic provinces by implementing the **SAFE** strategy (Surgery, Antibiotics, Facial Cleanliness, and Environmental Improvements).

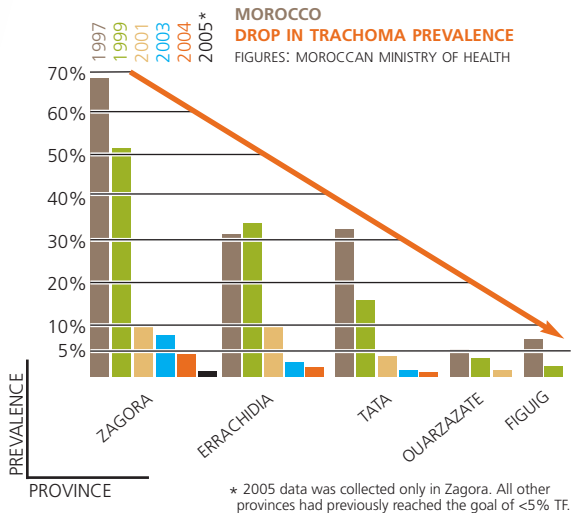
“The achievements of the mass intervention phase are a part of the national initiative for human development—a priority of King Mohammed VI—to address poverty alleviation and close the poverty gap in Morocco.”

— Ministry of Health, Morocco

Morocco has a long history of widespread trachoma infections with prevalence rates in the southeast provinces of Errachidia, Figuig, Ouarzazate, Tata, and Zagora reaching as high as 46% just 15 years ago.



An aggressive trachoma control program in recent years has lowered the national prevalence by 99%, from 28% in 1997 to less than 2.5% in 2005. Currently, Morocco has less than 5% active disease in children 1–9 years old and less than 0.1% trichiasis in adults over the age of 15.





The Strategy

Surgery becomes necessary when trachoma reaches the advanced stage, called trichiasis, in which the eyelashes turn inward and repeatedly scratch the cornea, ultimately resulting in blindness. The simple and cost-effective procedure prevents blindness by rotating the eyelashes away from the eye to avoid further scarring of the cornea and provides immediate relief from the painful and debilitating symptoms of trichiasis.

Antibiotics are used to treat active infections and suppress transmission in the community. Since 1998, Pfizer Inc has donated 52 million Zithromax® (azithromycin) treatments worldwide through the International Trachoma Initiative to treat trachoma infections. In 1999, Morocco joined forces with the International Trachoma Initiative to implement the SAFE strategy with Zithromax®, giving Morocco the distinction as one of the first national-level tests of the four-part strategy.



The Moroccan Ministries of Health and National Education conduct health education sessions about trachoma with children in the affected regions using model lessons that emphasize the importance of **facial cleanliness** in the control of trachoma. Children's books convey various methods of disease prevention.

Improving the availability of potable water supplies and sanitation facilities has been crucial to the trachoma campaign in Morocco. In many villages, **environmental improvements** have involved constructing a local water tower and latrines and showers in mosques or other public facilities.



Literacy training for women

In Morocco, women are trained as health educators to promote facial cleanliness and good sanitation practices because of their critical role in family and community health. Literacy training for women and girls is an important element of the prevention campaign, enabling them to learn about trachoma from printed materials, enhancing their self-confidence, and increasing their ability to change the behavioral and environmental factors that contribute to the transmission of trachoma.



International Trachoma Initiative

Founded in 1998 by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and Pfizer Inc, the International Trachoma Initiative builds on growing international momentum to support the goal of the World Health Organization to eliminate blinding trachoma as a public health concern by 2020. ITI catalyzes partnerships among international agencies and governmental and nongovernmental organizations to achieve elimination by promoting and supporting national governments to plan, implement and monitor sustainable trachoma control programs in endemic countries.

*Dedicated to Eliminating the World's
Leading Cause of Preventable Blindness*

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