

Recent news from WHO

- Elimination of **onchocerciasis** is feasible after a multicountry study found that treatment with ivermectin stopped further infections and transmission in three areas in Africa where the disease is endemic, WHO announced on 21 July. More than 37 million people are infected with onchocerciasis, also known as river blindness. The blackfly that transmits the disease breeds in rivers; it often blinds people, as well as causing debilitating skin conditions. The study was coordinated by TDR, a Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases.
- The first **World Humanitarian Day** was held on 19 August to recognize humanitarian workers who provide life-saving care in the field, to pay tribute to those who have died in the course of carrying out their humanitarian work and to call for continued commitment to provide care to people affected by war, natural disasters and other humanitarian crises.
- A key document was released highlighting measures to reduce the impact of the **influenza A (H1N1) pandemic**, particularly in vulnerable, low-resource and humanitarian settings. Call to action 17 August 2009 is a joint initiative by WHO, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC) and nongovernmental organizations. The document is available at: http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/swineflu/20090817_call_to_action_en.pdf

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