



## Blinding Trachoma in Niger

The International Trachoma Initiative (ITI) is dedicated to eliminating blinding trachoma, the world's leading cause of preventable blindness.

Trachoma can be prevented and cured with inexpensive, time-limited treatment. ITI's work is grounded in the WHO-endorsed strategy called SAFE: **S**urgery for trachomatous trichiasis (TT), **A**ntibiotics (Pfizer-donated Zithromax) to treat active infection, **F**ace-washing to reduce transmission, and **E**nvironmental improvement through access to clean water and better sanitation.

Blinding trachoma is a disease of poverty that affects 41 million people, mostly women and children, in 56 countries. Building on success in Morocco, ITI currently works in 15 of the countries most affected by trachoma, including Niger where it has had a country office since December 2001.

### TRACHOMA IN NIGER

*Niger Population: 13,272,679<sup>i</sup>*

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TFP (Trachoma Free Project)  
are needed to see this picture

*Niger Rank on Human Development Index: No.174 of 177 countries<sup>ii</sup>*

#### **Infection:**

- More than 73,000 Nigeriens have been blinded by trachoma.<sup>iii</sup>
- 59,865 Nigeriens have trichiasis<sup>iv</sup>, the advanced stage of trachoma, and need immediate surgery.
- Over 12 million Nigerians are at risk of trachoma infection.<sup>v</sup>
- Of children aged 1-9 years, over 1.8 million—36.4%—have an active trachoma infection.<sup>vi</sup>
- Trachoma is endemic in 35 of Niger's 42 districts.<sup>vii</sup>

#### **ITI Activities:**

- ITI supported the administration of 5,958,234 Zithromax treatments in Niger in 2007.<sup>viii</sup>
- ITI was able to provide enough Zithromax to allow expansion into three regions that were not scheduled to begin antibiotic administration until 2008-2010.<sup>ix</sup>
- ITI-supported partners performed trachomatous trichiasis (TT) surgeries on 2,804 people in Niger in 2007,<sup>x</sup> with 98% of these surgeries taking place in surgical outreach camps.<sup>xi</sup>
- Niger's National Five-Year Strategic Plan for Trachoma Control (2005-2009) is part of an international initiative calling for the Global Elimination of Trachoma by 2020. ITI's and other partners' support has enabled the program to make great strides towards eliminating blinding trachoma in Niger by 2015.<sup>xii</sup>

- National Trachoma Control Goals for 2008<sup>xiii</sup> include:
  - Perform 12,530 TT surgeries through 20 surgical outreach camps
  - Administer 8.4 million doses of Zithromax in 24 districts in 5 regions

### Opportunities:

- In 2007, trachoma was integrated with four other diseases into a national Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) program that was launched in 19 districts in the Tillaberi, Tahoua and Dosso Regions.<sup>xiv</sup>
- In 2008, the focus will continue on the NTD program, which is assisting greatly in covering most of the trachoma endemic districts. According to the proposed NTD plan, the trachoma program will include five new districts of the Maradi region.<sup>xv</sup>
- All components of the SAFE strategy have been implemented in 11 districts, covering 3,233,175 people in 2007.<sup>xvi</sup>
- Access to the antibiotic Zithromax expanded from 107,957 treatments<sup>xvii</sup> administered in 2002—the program's first year—to 5,958,234 treatments in 2007.<sup>xviii</sup>

### Challenges:

- The national TT surgery backlog is 59,865.<sup>xix</sup> Funds are needed for more surgery outreach camps, so that a greater number of operations can be performed.<sup>xx</sup>
- There are only 11 ophthalmologists in Niger.<sup>xxi</sup>
- The nomadic population in the Diffa region is difficult to treat using conventional strategies.<sup>xxii</sup>
- Access to improved sanitation is only 5% rural as opposed to 79% urban.<sup>xxiii</sup>

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*The International Trachoma Initiative (ITI) is a non-governmental organization working to prevent, treat and ultimately eliminate blinding trachoma. Building on success in Morocco, ITI currently works in 15 countries in Africa and Asia. ITI is a major proponent and facilitator of the SAFE strategy to prevent and eliminate trachoma through **S**urgery, **A**ntibiotics, **F**acial cleanliness and **E**nvironmental improvement. ITI, created through a public-private partnership of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and Pfizer Inc, collaborates with international agencies, governmental, and non-governmental organizations to build targeted support—including Zithromax<sup>®</sup> donated by Pfizer—for expanded implementation of the SAFE strategy, operational research and program evaluation, education and advocacy. <http://www.trachoma.org>*

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<sup>i</sup> "CIA World Factbook." United States Central Intelligence Agency. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ng.html>> accessed 16 April 2008.

<sup>ii</sup> "Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008." International Trachoma Initiative.

<sup>iii</sup> Data provided by Dr. Kadri Boubaker, Assistant National Coordinator, PNLCC: Programme National de Lutte Contre la Cecite (National Blindness Prevention Program), 2008.

<sup>iv</sup> Data source: National Blindness Prevention Program (PNLCC).

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<sup>v</sup> “Niger Trachoma Data Form (2008).” World Health Organization Alliance for the Global Elimination of Blinding Trachoma, Twelfth Meeting. Geneva, Switzerland: 28-30 April 2008.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>viii</sup> “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008.” International Trachoma Initiative.

<sup>ix</sup> “Country program progress, achievements & plans.” International Trachoma Initiative. 2008.

<sup>x</sup> “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008.” International Trachoma Initiative.

<sup>xi</sup> “Country program progress, achievements & plans.” International Trachoma Initiative. 2008.

<sup>xii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xv</sup> “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008.” International Trachoma Initiative.

<sup>xvi</sup> Data source: National Blindness Prevention Program (PNLCC).

<sup>xvii</sup> “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2007.” International Trachoma Initiative.

<sup>xviii</sup> “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008.” International Trachoma Initiative.

<sup>xix</sup> Data source: National Blindness Prevention Program (PNLCC).

<sup>xx</sup> “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008.” International Trachoma Initiative.

<sup>xxi</sup> Data source: National Blindness Prevention Program (PNLCC).

<sup>xxii</sup> “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008.” International Trachoma Initiative.

<sup>xxiii</sup> “Earth Trends Niger Country Profile.” EarthTrends.

<[http://earthtrends.wri.org/pdf\\_library/country\\_profiles/pop\\_cou\\_562.pdf](http://earthtrends.wri.org/pdf_library/country_profiles/pop_cou_562.pdf)> accessed 18 April 2008.

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