



Nation Boston's
wicked winter
snowstorms



Black History
Month The
Selma march



Newsmakers
A beagle is the
top dog.

TIME FOR KIDS

LEVEL
5-6



A boy drinks
from a special
straw that protects
him from Guinea-
worm disease.

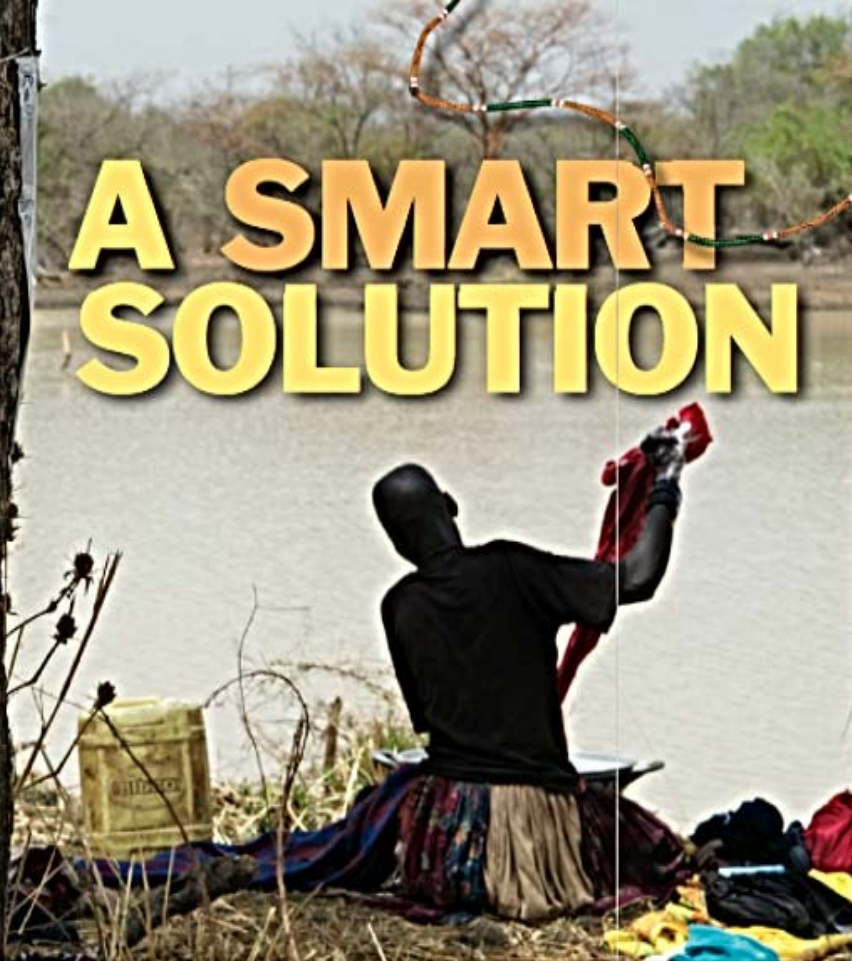
A HEALTHIER WORLD

Efforts to wipe out a disease that
comes from dirty water are working.



WARNING SIGN
A reminder to people with Guinea worm: Don't get in the water!

A SMART SOLUTION



Words

Contract (kon-trakt) *verb*: to become ill with a disease
Waterborne *adjective*: spread or carried by water

Experts say the world will soon be free of a painful disease.

Thirsty? No problem. Here in the United States, filling your glass is as easy as a trip to the kitchen sink. But in many parts of the world, clean, safe drinking water is out of reach.

"There are 748 million people worldwide who don't have safe water to drink," says Sarina Prabasi of WaterAid America, which helps people get clean water. "That's about one in 10 people." Each year, millions of people become sick after drinking contaminated water.

But there is good news: One **waterborne** illness, Guinea-worm disease, is close to being wiped out. Thirty years ago, about 3.5 million people in 21 countries in Asia and Africa had the disease. Today, there are only 126 cases left in the world, in just four countries (see map).

Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter and his team

DRINK UP
This special straw has a filter inside.

at the Carter Center, in Atlanta, Georgia, have led the effort to wipe out the disease. In two to three years, Carter told TFK, "the whole world will be free of Guinea worm forever."

Troubled Waters

The only way to **contract** Guinea worm is to drink from a lake or pond containing water fleas that carry the disease. Nothing happens until about a year after a person sips the water. Then a thin worm emerges, usually from a blister on the person's leg, causing pain and making it difficult to walk.

It takes weeks to recover. For a child, that means weeks away from school. For a farmer, it means weeks away from the field. "Sometimes, three-fourths of a village would have the disease at the same time," says Carter. "It would completely

wipe out the productivity . . . of the village."

Taking Action

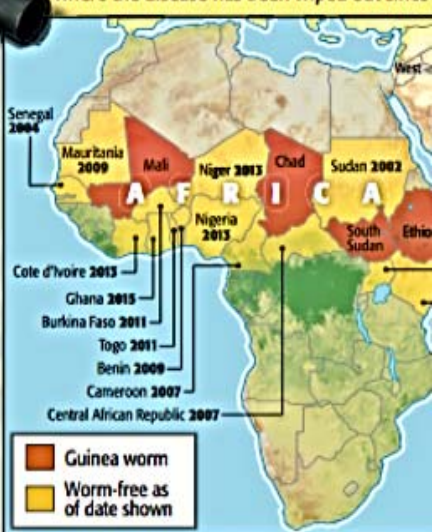
Carter's team began working to defeat Guinea worm in 1986. They knew a simple way to protect against the



GET WELL. In 2007, Jimmy Carter comforts a young patient.

GETTING TO ZERO

Guinea worm is still present in four African countries. The map shows these as well as 14 other African countries where the disease has been wiped out since



disease: Filter water through a piece of cloth and water becomes Guinea-worm-free. But convincing people to take even this simple step was a challenge. Many did not want to believe that the water was so grateful to have was making them sick. "We were so grateful to have was making them sick," says Carter. "We used the children to teach the adults what to show through a magnifying glass the little worms swimming around in the water that had the Guinea worm eggs in them," says Carter.

Often, kids were most open to the new information. "We used the children to teach the adults what to do," says Carter. "They would put on plays in their schools." Health workers also taught people not to go to the water while they had Guinea worm, since doing so would spread the disease. Fewer people got sick each year. "We're very close now," says Dr. Donald R. Hopkins, president for health programs at the Carter Center. "It's not over until we get to zero."

Countdown to Zero, a new exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History, in New York City, is about efforts to wipe out six diseases, including Guinea worm. According to curator Mark Siddall, the message is clear: "All humans on the planet live in a global community, and we have a shared responsibility to take care of each other."

—By Suzanne

Think

Why was it helpful to involve kids in the effort to wipe out Guinea-worm?

