Reports on schistosomiasis prevalence in Angola show a marked decrease in the last decade. Rollinson reports that from 2003 to 2010, prevalence of the intestinal and urinary forms of the disease decreased from 44.0% to 28.8% [1]. However, no formal schistosomiasis elimination efforts have been put into effect in Angola as of yet, leaving the root causes of these positive changes in disease prevalence unclear. While national tropical disease elimination programs have, in the past, been neglected, Angola’s government has adopted a “National Strategic Plan for the Elimination of NTD’s 2012-2016” through coordination of The ENDFund and Angola’s Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education. NTD mapping of endemic diseases including schistosomiasis, intestinal worms, lymphatic filariasis, and river blindness was scheduled to begin in 2013 with an MDA in the same year [2].

Overview of Angola [7]
- Population in 2014: 19,625,353
- Official Language: Portuguese
- Capital: Luanda
- Republic
- Percentage of Population with Access to Improved Drinking Water in 2012: 54.3%
- Percentage of Population with Access to Improved Sanitation in 2012: 60.1%
Angola’s recent history has been plagued by oppressive Portuguese colonial rule and over a quarter century of civil war following colonial collapse in 1974, lasting until peace settlements in 2002 with short, fragile periods of peace [3]. Peace settlements were first broached in 2005, but political strife and civilian fighting resumed by 1998 and lasted until 2003. The 27 years of war resulted in humanitarian devastation. Since the end of the civil war, Angola’s government has transitioned towards democracy, and with oil exports and foreign loans has since experienced economic growth [3]. The Ministry of Health now works alongside The END Fund and local NGO’s to develop partnerships to combat NTD’s [2].

Disease Prevalence in Angola

Schistosomiasis disease prevalence, measured as the percentage of infected individuals within the total population, has decreased in Angola since 2003. More research is needed to support this trend.

The geography of Angola, and changes in land use, do little to disclose the process by which schistosomiasis rates have dropped in the last decade. The country is located on the eastern Atlantic coast of southern Africa and shares borders with Congo, the DRC, and Zambia. Angola is a large country dominated by woody vegetation and forests in the north and central regions and an arid dry climate in the south [4].

Looking Ahead

The new efforts to map and address NTD’s including schistosomiasis in Angola comes from rapid economic growth and stability following years of war [2]. In time, it is hoped that the outcomes of this research will shed light on the real extent of schistosomiasis in Angola, including snail habitat distribution and abundance, and the best route towards establishing widespread control.

References