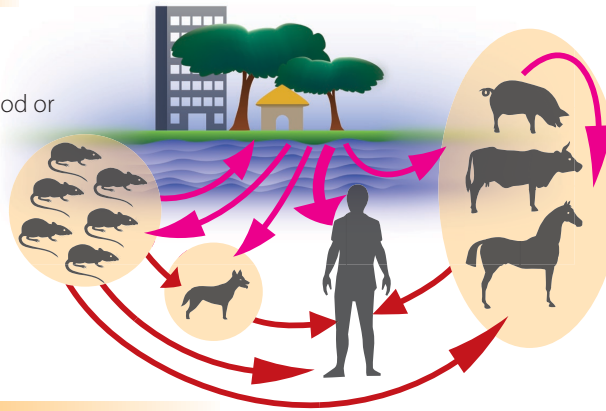


Improving Health Security and Economic Development by Reducing the Global Burden of Leptospirosis

Investing in reliable global human leptospirosis burden estimates

A disease of public health importance

- Leptospirosis is a serious bacterial disease that occurs all over the world.
- Rodents and other animals harbour and spread the disease.
- Transmission to humans occurs when they come in contact with water, food or soil that is contaminated with infected animal urine.
- Leptospirosis is under-recognized and often mistaken for other diseases.
- Leptospirosis causes severe long term health problems including renal failure, bleeding and inflammation of the heart muscle.
- Children are particularly vulnerable to serious forms of the disease.
- 5 to 30% of people infected with leptospira die.
- Changing environmental trends, including extreme weather patterns increase the threat of severe epidemics around the world.



To coordinate and direct global research and action against human leptospirosis the World Health Organization has established the **Leptospirosis Burden Epidemiology Reference Group (LERG)**, a group of leading experts with a broad skill set. The LERG is partnering with multiple international actors to achieve its goals.

The LERG is assigned with the following tasks over the next three years:

- reviewing and appraising epidemiological evidence based on commissioned reviews and studies
- developing epidemiological tools to estimate disease burden
- estimating and expressing disease burden through summary measures of population health (including disability-adjusted life years (DALY))
- identifying technical gaps for research

A treatable disease if ...

- Detected and treated with antibiotics in a timely manner.

A preventable disease when...

- Risk factors are appropriately identified and managed.
- Interventions are targeted towards risks at individual and community levels.
- All relevant sectors collaborate and coordinate prevention and control measures.
- There is awareness of the significance of the problem and a willingness to act.

To date little is known about the real impact of leptospirosis on people and their livelihoods. Prevention, control and intervention efforts need to be guided by accurate estimates of disease burden.

Converting disease burden estimates into global impact



Get involved



What can you do to support the global action against leptospirosis, its prevention and control?

- Offer technical expertise to LERG
- Provide human resources to the initiative
- Join the alliance of financial contributors

We would like to hear from you - please contact: lerg@who.int

Hidden disease burden and risk to global health security

- Actual incidence of leptospirosis in Hawaii is estimated to be double the reported incidence.
- A study in Peru demonstrates high levels of under-diagnosis of leptospirosis and under-recognition of severe complications especially in urban areas.
- A study from Gabon shows that over 15% of people in slum communities show evidence of infection with leptospira.
- Unusual flooding in Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka caused overflowing of rodent-infested sewers exposing inhabitants to leptospirosis infection.
- Leptospirosis soared across Central America following Hurricane Mitch (1998).
- Global travel to high-risk areas increases the exposure of individuals to leptospirosis.

The Leptospirosis Burden Epidemiology Reference Group (LERG)

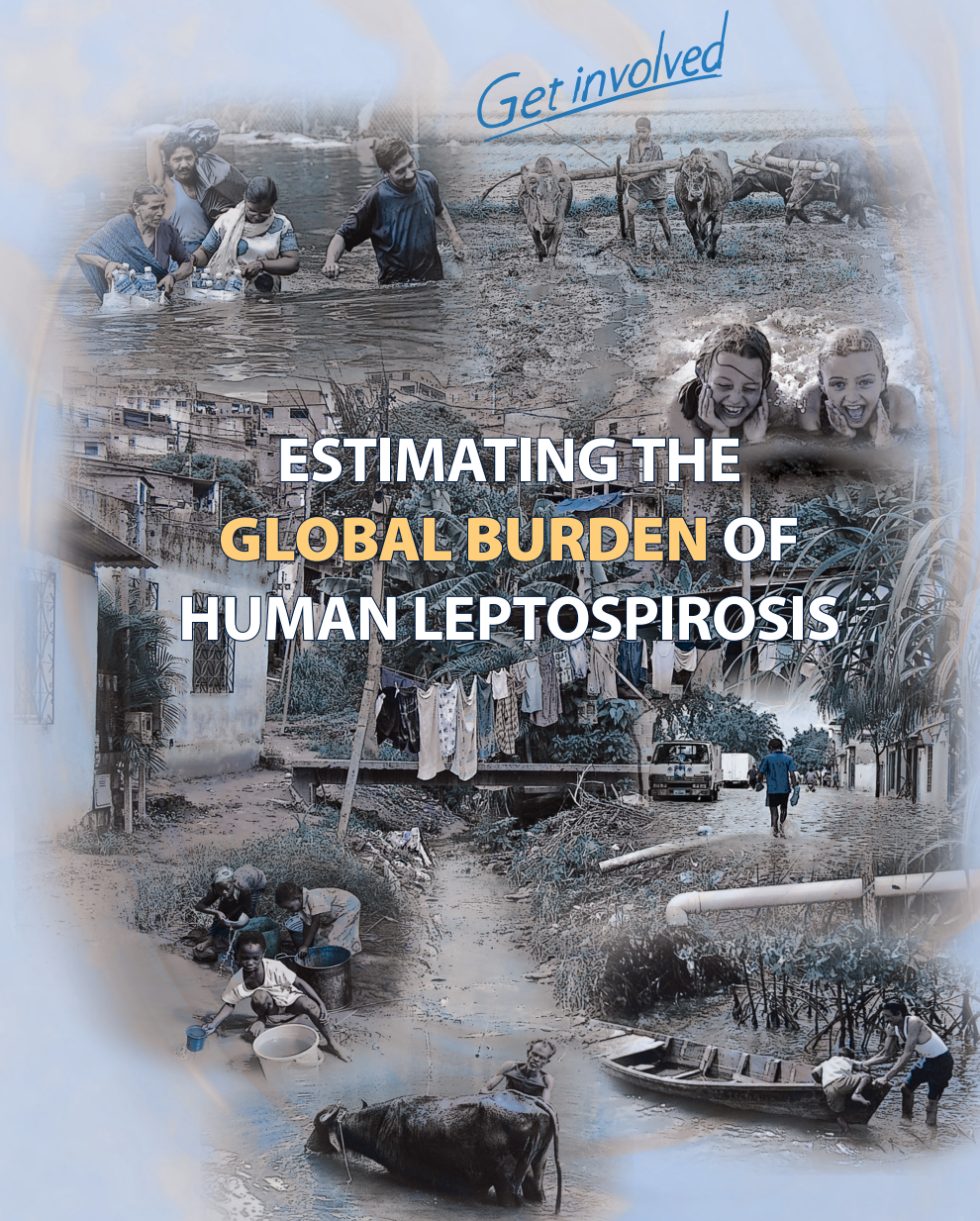
The LERG coordinates a comprehensive assessment of the global burden of leptospirosis to guide public health policy on leptospirosis prevention and control.

For further information about LERG
www.who.int/zoonoses/diseases/lerg/en/
E-mail: lerg@who.int



Department of Food Safety and Zoonoses
Health Security and Environment
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
20 Avenue Appia 1211 Geneva 27 Switzerland

© WHO 2009
WHO/FOS 2009.1



Photos: Regional Medical Research Centre/Porirua/India - Federico Costa and Albert Ko, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation and Weill Medical College of Cornell University, Dr. A. Tayeh/DMS