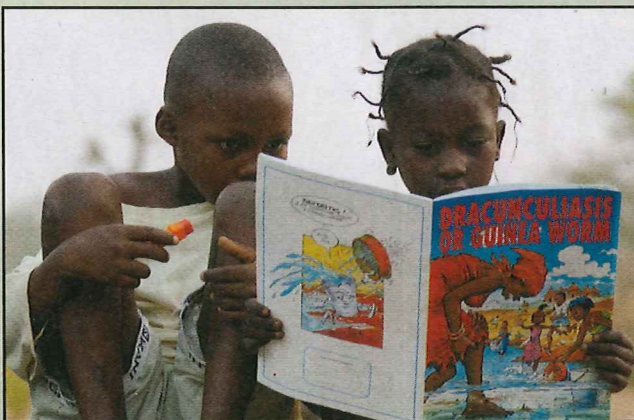




WARNING SIGN
This is a reminder that people with Guinea worm should not go in the water.

A SMART SOLUTION



READ ON Kids look at a comic book about ways to stop the spread of Guinea worm.

Power Words

contract (kon-trakt): to become ill with a disease

waterborne: 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 dirty 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

RT
ON

DRINK UP
This straw has a filter. It protects against Guinea worm.

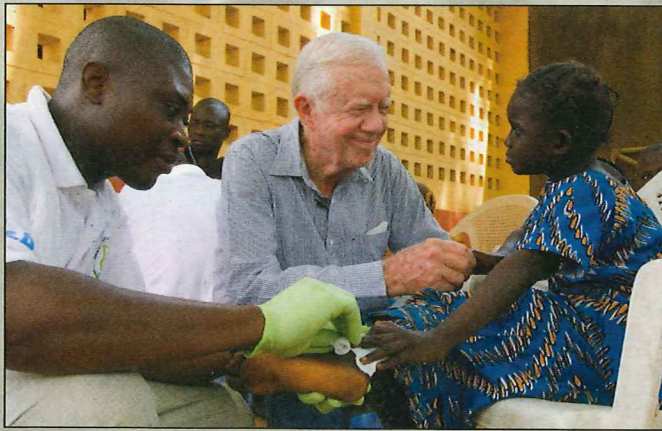
the world, in four countries (see map).

Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter and his team 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.”

Taking Action

A person **contracts** Guinea worm by drinking from a pond containing water fleas that carry the disease. About a year later, the disease appears. It takes weeks to recover. For a child, that means weeks away from school. For a farmer, it means weeks away from the field.

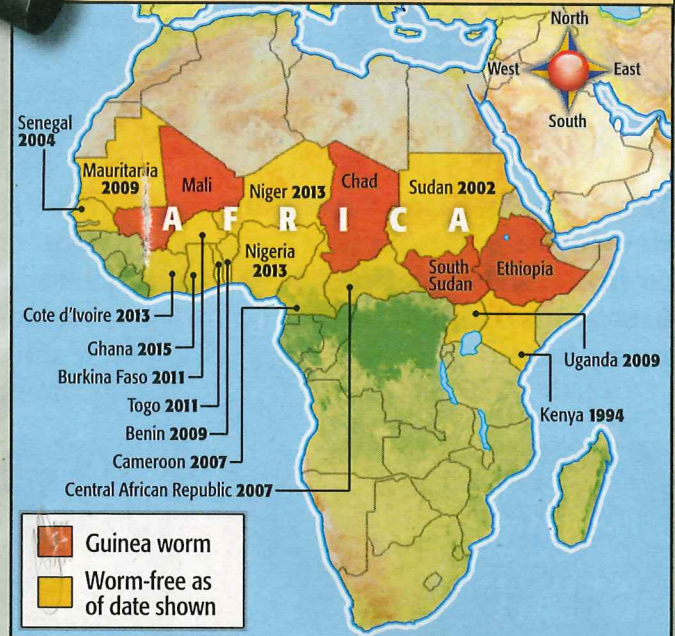
Carter’s team began working to defeat Guinea worm in 1986. They knew a simple way to protect against the disease. Filter water through a piece of cloth, and the water becomes Guinea-worm-free. But



BETTER SOON In 2007, Jimmy Carter comforts a patient in Ghana. The country is now Guinea-worm-free.

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 1986.



convincing people to take this step was a challenge.

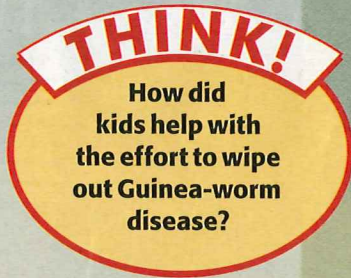
Many did not believe that the water they were so grateful to have was making them sick.

“We had to show through a magnifying glass the little creatures swimming around in the water that had the Guinea-worm eggs in them,” says Carter.

Health workers also taught people not to get in the water while they had Guinea worm, since doing so can spread the disease. Fewer people got sick each year. “We’re very close now,” says Dr. Donald R. Hopkins, vice president for health programs at the Carter Center. “But 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, tells about efforts to wipe out six diseases, including Guinea worm. According to curator Mark Siddall, the lesson is clear: “All humans on the planet live in a big global community, and we have a shared responsibility to take care of each other.”

—By Suzanne Zimble



To watch a video about the Carter Center’s effort to wipe out Guinea-worm disease, go to timeforkids.com/carter.