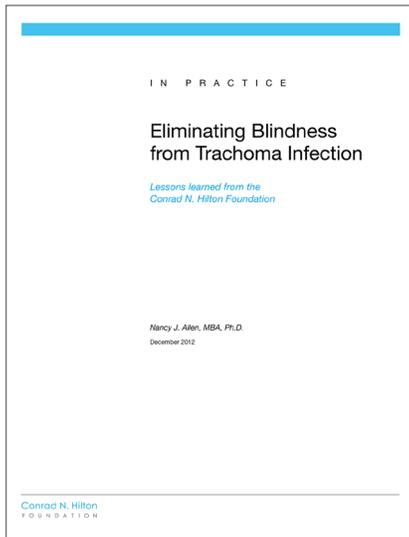


This is a summary of the full In Practice report:



Read the full report at
www.hiltonfoundation.org

Key Findings

Inherent Challenges

- Initial lack of capacity for SAFE interventions among international NGOs
- Difficulty assessing individual elements of the SAFE strategy
- Structural complexities among multiple players complicate public health programming

Elements of Success

- Similarities between trachoma control grantmaking and the Foundation's established work with WASH
- Sector-wide acceptance of the SAFE strategy as best practice for trachoma elimination
- Growing attention to the neglected tropical diseases (NTD) field
- Positive strategic partnerships, both formal and informal, among Foundation grantees

Eliminating Blindness from Trachoma Infection

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation has played a critical role in the international effort to combat blinding trachoma, contributing directly to the elimination of trachoma in a number of countries and helping to build the capacity that will allow the effort to proceed more effectively over the next five to 10 years.

The Hilton Foundation began its support for the elimination of blinding trachoma in 1997 with grants to The Carter Center (\$13.6 million) and World Vision (\$1.13 million), and to Helen Keller International (\$5 million) in 1998. These initial grants focused exclusively on the environmental components of trachoma transmission because they integrated with elements of the Foundation's WASH (**W**ater, **S**anitation, and **H**ygien**e**) work.

In 2008, the Foundation separated its trachoma grantmaking from its water and sanitation program, and expanded support for the full SAFE strategy. SAFE, or Surgery, Antibiotics, Face washing, and Environmental improvements, is the four-part strategy adopted by the Alliance for the Global Elimination of Blinding Trachoma by 2020 (GET 2020).

Evidence for the individual elements of the SAFE strategy does not always meet the most rigorous methodological standards. Support for the full SAFE strategy is strongly favored, however, based on the historical record of trachoma decline, recent in-country experience from comprehensive implementation of the SAFE strategy, operational research on specific components of the strategy, and the informed conviction of leading researchers.

Working with leaders in the trachoma field, the Hilton Foundation has:

- **Played a critical role in the trachoma elimination effort** in Ghana, which met almost all elimination targets for trachoma in 2010, and in Mali and Niger, which are poised to eliminate trachoma by 2015.
- **Contributed formatively to development of the SAFE strategy**, with particular support to development of the F and E components in the early years of the GET 2020 campaign.
- **Built capacity at national and international levels** by shaping leadership patterns in the field with its initial and ongoing support to The Carter Center and Helen Keller International.
- **Continued to contribute to knowledge generation** in the field in a variety of ways.

The Hilton Foundation has made critical contributions to trachoma control and prevention, but the goal of elimination is not yet met. Enormous effort will be required to meet the 2020 elimination deadline, providing a unique opportunity (rarely available in philanthropy) for meeting an ambitious goal and planning a thoughtful exit.

Continued funding should be targeted toward ensuring that 2020 is still viable. Funders should work to renew and adapt the SAFE strategy, expand the elimination of trachoma within the NTD network, and accelerate the formal adoption and approval by the WHO of Guidelines for Certification of Elimination.

The Foundation has multiple opportunities for future impact beyond trachoma, both through WASH-related public health efforts and within the program area for confronting sight loss. Policies and principles to guide future grantmaking within this program area should be developed.