Use of Remote Sensing/Geographical Information Systems (RS/GIS) to identify the
distributional limits of soil-transmitted helminths (STHs) and their association to
prevalence of intestinal infection in school-age children in four rural communities in
Boaco, Nicaragua

Max J. Moreno¹, Mohammad Z. Al-Hamdan², David G. Parajón³, Douglas. L. Rickman⁴, Jeffrey Luvall⁴,
Laura C. Parajon³, Roberto A. Martinez³, and Sue Estes²

(1) Earth Science Office at NASA Marshall Space Flight Center, National Space Science and Technology Center,
Global Hydrology and Climate Center, Fellow of the NASA Postdoctoral Program/ORAU, 320 Sparkman Drive,
Huntsville, AL 35805.
(2) Universities Space Research Association at NASA Marshall Space Flight Center, National Space Science and
Technology Center, NASA Global Hydrology and Climate Center, Huntsville, AL 35805.
(3) AMOS Health and Hope, Apdo.Postal 5051, Managua, Nicaragua.
(4) Earth Science Office at NASA Marshall Space Flight Center, National Space Science and Technology Center,
NASA Global Hydrology and Climate Center, Huntsville, AL 35805.

Selection:
GIS Mapping, Global Health Surveillance and Public Policy

Background:
STHs can infect all members of a population but school-age children living in poverty are at greater risk.
Infection can be controlled with drug treatment, health education and sanitation. Helminth control
programs often lack resources and reliable information to identify areas of highest risk to guide
interventions and to monitor progress.

Objectives:
To use RS/GIS to identify the environmental variables that correlate with the ecology of STHs and with
the prevalence of STH infections.

Methods:
Geo-referenced in situ prevalence data will be overlaid over an ecological map derived from the RS
environmental data using ESRI’s ArcGIS 9.3. Prevalence data and RS environmental data matching at the
same geographical location will be analyzed for correlation and those RS environmental variables that
better correlate with prevalence data will be included in a multivariate regression model. Temperature,
vegetation, and distance to bodies of water will be inferred using data from the Moderate-Resolution
Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) onboard the Terra and Aqua satellites, and Thematic Mapper (TM)
and Enhance Thematic Mapper Plus (ETM+) satellite sensors onboard Landsat 5 and Landsat 7
respectively. Elevation will be estimated with data from The Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM).
Prevalence and intensity of infections will be determined by parasitological survey (Kato Katz) of
children enrolled in rural schools in Boaco, Nicaragua, in the communities of El Roblar, Cumaica Norte,
Malacatoya 1, and Malacatoya 2).

Expected Results:
Associations between RS environmental data and prevalence in situ data will be determined and their
applications to public health will be discussed.
Discussion/Conclusions:
The use of RS/GIS data to predict the prevalence of STH infections could be useful for helminth control programs, providing improved geographical guidance of interventions while increasing cost-effectiveness.

Learning Objectives:
- To identify the RS environmental variables that can help predict the prevalence of STH infections.
- To understand potential applications of RS/GIS to national helminth control programs.
- To assess the applicability of RS/GIS to control STH infections.