



Press Release

EXPERTS DISCUSS MALARIA RESEARCH STRENGTHENING IN AFRICA

Brazzaville, 26 March 2007 – Experts, researchers and malaria control programme managers are meeting in Brazzaville from 26-30 March under the auspices of the Multilateral Initiative on Malaria (MIM), the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa.

The five-day meeting brings together researchers, implementers, as well as WHO and its partners to exchange information on MIM-supported malaria research; discuss critical needs in capacity for malaria research, and identify mechanisms for strengthening MIM's role in supporting research capacity in Africa.

Dr Rufaro Chatora, the Director of the Division of Non Communicable Diseases at the WHO Regional Office for Africa opened the meeting on behalf of the WHO Regional Director for Africa, Dr Luis Sambo.

In his statement, the Regional Director underlined the importance of research in malaria control. He also emphasized the critical role that research can play in strengthening health systems through: better interventions; improving service delivery models and tools; generating new knowledge; developing new and more effective drugs, particularly those for treating pregnant women and children, and the development of effective malaria vaccines.

In order for such research to take into account Africa's needs and to make a difference in countries, Africans, both researchers and implementers, must engage, take the lead in setting priorities, conducting high quality and ethical research, and disseminating and using results for evidence-based decisions. These are underlying principles of the new TDR vision and strategy.

Given the scope of resources and long term investment involved, the Regional Director strongly advocated for increased donor funding and for implementation of the Mexico recommendation that partners and countries allocate 5% and 2% respectively of their health funding respectively to research and capacity building.

In a message to the participants, the Executive Director of the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, Prof. Awa Marie Coll-Seck, reiterated the importance of malaria research in scaling up malaria interventions. She encouraged countries to take advantage of the possibility of including research activities in Round 7 applications to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

In their interventions, participants in the meeting expressed the hope that in the not too distant future, African countries will have sustained capacity to produce, utilize and manage research. This calls for a comprehensive capacity strengthening plan and commitment, as well as contributions from all stakeholders.

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