



Medicines for Malaria Venture

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and
Trade, Human Rights Subcommittee

Inquiry into women and girls in the Indian Ocean Asia Pacific region

May 2014

Introduction

"The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being..." Promoting and protecting health and respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights are inextricably linked. (World Health Organisation)

Malaria takes a child's life every minute. It is estimated that between 610,000 – 971,000 people die from malaria each year, mostly young children. Although most people living in areas where malaria is widespread develop immunity to the disease, a pregnant woman's risk of infection increases due to changes in her hormone levels and immune system. First-time mothers are especially vulnerable. Pregnant women suffering from malaria are at increased risk of anemia and miscarriage, and their babies are at risk of stillbirth, prematurity, intrauterine growth retardation, and low birth weight.

The World Health Organisation has noted that in some heavy-burden countries, the disease accounts for up to 40% of public health expenditures, 30 – 50% of inpatient hospital admissions, and up to 60% of outpatient health clinic visits. The 22 countries in Asia Pacific are home to approximately 67% of the world's population at risk of malaria - some 2.3 billion people - and Southeast Asia is the global epicentre for drug-resistant forms of the disease. Malaria poses a serious limitation on regional economic growth, which, in turn, has implications for Australian economic diplomacy in the region.

Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) is an independent not-for-profit organisation that applies social venture capital principles to the development of new products that would otherwise not be developed through traditional private sector mechanisms. Organisational models such as Product Development Partnerships (PDPs) like MMV have evolved as an effective mechanism for leveraging public and private sector support in the development of new low-cost health products – such as medicines,



vaccines and diagnostics.. MMV has directly supported Australian scientists for over a decade, funding \$2 - \$3 million annually into collaborative research projects.

Since its foundation in 1999, MMV and partners have developed and registered four new medicines: Pyramax©, with Shin Poong; Eurartesim© with Sigma-Tau, Artesun© with Guilin and Coartem© *Dispersible* with Novartis. With the largest-ever pipeline of antimalarial molecules, MMV and its partners in the public and private sectors are set to develop and deliver critical medicines for the ultimate eradication of malaria. Hence the importance of MMV in addressing one of the major health challenges confronting Australia's regional neighbours.

The UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, has considered the importance of human rights in sustainable development principles and development outcomes leading to 2030. It has identified the key to success will be to move to a new global partnership that is inclusive of new avenues of cooperation including between governments, international organisations, civil society and the private sector. At the operational level, multi-stakeholder partnerships around new goals will be crucial for the implementation of the new agenda.¹ Medicines for Malaria Venture is one such agency well positioned to expand its relationships with Australian public and private agencies.

Combatting malaria will help to:

- Alleviate poverty: A complete cure of relapsing malaria can help sufferers, particularly those most vulnerable: children under the age of 5, and women.
- Boost economic development: More effective medicines will reduce the number of school/work days lost to malaria and reduce the amount of family income spent on healthcare and support community building and engagement.
- Enable the global community to contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development goals 4, 5, 6, & 8 and the post MDG development framework.

The Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, in its report of March 27, 2014 strongly supported an expansion of Australia's contribution to global health, recommending that the Australian Government renew the Medical Research Strategy (MRS) and expand funding to \$50 million per annum. The Committee strongly supported research and development through PDPs noting the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's initial 2013 investment of \$10 million MRS investment to four PDP's "has delivered a high return on investment, supporting a portfolio of 71 drug, 14 vaccine and 19 diagnostic projects." The biopharmaceutical industry, working with PDP's has been a significant contributor to the development of these products.

Recommendations

¹ <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html>



Medicines for Malaria Venture recommends the Australian government:

- Provide development assistance in priority areas such as health and education, targeting disadvantaged women and children to reduce the inequality in developing nations.
- Provide assistance to improve health system governance, accountability and procurement practices to improve health outcomes, including through the supply of effective malaria medicines.
- Focus on the poorest and most vulnerable and marginalised populations, including women and girls, people living with and affected by malaria and other tropical diseases.
- Work collaboratively with international agencies such as Medicines for Malaria Venture and our partners, including scientists working in Australian universities and research centers, in the development of effective, low cost medicines to treat malaria, and the development of access pathways to ensure medicines are available to those in need.
- Continue to support the Asia-Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance and investment in the Asia Development Bank's Regional Malaria and Other Communicable Diseases Trust Fund, with a view to expanding support for the development of new malaria medicines as part of an integrated strategy towards malaria elimination.
- Maintain support for international financing and procurement mechanisms such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to help lower prices for lifesaving medicines and other technologies (including diagnostics).
- Support increased policy coherence between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Australian publicly funded research agencies through a partnership with MMV based on an international collaborative research and development program, targeting malaria product development and related technologies.
- Support the Millennium Development Goals, and post 2015 global development framework to reflect the human right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including the treatment and eradication of malaria.

Conclusion



Access to health care is a fundamental human right. Women and children carry the highest malaria burden, which impacts their capacity to participate in education and work, impacting socially and economically.

Product Development research by MMV and our partners can turn basic scientific discoveries into low cost, affordable life-saving medicines.

Medicines for Malaria Venture and our partners, including industry, governments, the philanthropic sector and related product development partnerships have the capacity and commitment to achieving improvements in the health status of women and children, through the treatment and eventual elimination of malaria.

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[Attachment](#)
MMV at a Glance