

BHP Billiton Joins Medicines for Malaria Venture in the Fight Against Malaria

Partnership Focuses on Protecting Workers, Families and Communities in Malaria Endemic Countries by Discovering, Developing And Delivering New, Effective and Affordable Medicines

MAPUTO, Mozambique; MELBOURNE, Australia; GENEVA, Switzerland; 2 June 2004 – Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) and BHP Billiton announced today that they are entering into a partnership to discover, develop & deliver effective and affordable medicine against malaria. MMV will team up with the world's largest mineral resources company to bring about long-term positive health impact in disease endemic countries by ensuring that everyone at risk of malaria has access to life-saving antimalarials. The announcement of the public-private partnership at the World Economic Forum's Africa Economic Summit is a major boost to drug development and delivery in the fight against malaria.

BHP Billiton has pledged US\$750,000 to MMV to continue its efforts to develop a pipeline of new antimalarials. As a major corporate partner, BHP Billiton will also explore ways it can contribute to help ensure that the medicines reach the patients by working with the World Health Organization (WHO), local governments and other organizations.

Although malaria is a curable disease if promptly diagnosed and properly treated, it is still killing more than one million people every year and causing developmental problems in many more. Today, there are more cases of malaria in Africa than any time in recorded history. With nearly 40 percent of the human population at risk and the majority of the victims being children, it is one of the most persistent global health scourges.

The biggest challenge facing malaria control today is widespread drug resistance. The cheap drugs such as chloroquine and sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine (SP), which are widely available, are virtually useless. While the malaria parasite was making a quiet comeback beginning in the late 1970's, the malaria research and development pipeline went dry. During the past 30 years, only three antimalarials were developed, and they were all prophylactics designed for the military and wealthy traveller, not the rural poor. MMV was established in response to the failure of the market system to provide the required incentives for malaria R&D.

"BHP Billiton is already making a significant difference in the communities they operate in by supporting malaria control programs," said Dr. Christopher Hentschel, CEO of MMV. "Now with their support for MMV to develop new antimalarial drugs, they are in fact making a major investment in the future. Without a continuous stream of new drugs, we will have no hope of controlling malaria."

BHP Billiton, because of its operations in malaria endemic regions, has both a social and economic alignment of interest with MMV in trying to reduce the burden of malaria. This relationship links directly with its Charter and Health, Safety, Environment and Community Policy.

"We have been working in malaria endemic regions for decades and we know from first-hand experience the terrible effects malaria has on our workers, their families and the entire community," said Ian Wood, BHP Billiton Vice-President for Sustainable Development and Community Relations.

"The vision of a world in which affordable drugs will eliminate the devastating effects of malaria and help protect children, pregnant women and vulnerable workers from this scourge, is a shared vision of both BHP Billiton and MMV. BHP Billiton has chosen to support MMV not only because we share this vision but also because MMV is offering real hope in the combat against malaria. Their products have the potential to save millions of lives and make an enormous contribution in public health," Mr. Wood said.

Beyond the human toll, malaria costs Africa more than US\$ 12 billion in lost GDP every year. Developing countries spend up to 40% of their public health expenditure on malaria. The morbidity and mortality that is associated with malaria make it difficult for people to overcome poverty. Malaria related expenses claim up to 30% of the entire household expenditure among the very poor.

