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Dear partners, friends, and colleagues:

The following is a summary of recent, current, and upcoming activities at the Meningitis Vaccine Project (MVP). We welcome your comments and suggestions at [info@meningvax.org](mailto:info@meningvax.org) and encourage you to forward this update to friends or colleagues who might be interested in learning about MVP's progress.

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### **Vaccine introduction and communication activities**

- Preparations continue to advance both for the continued rollout of MenAfriVac® in Nigeria and Sudan and for the first introduction of the vaccine in Ethiopia and The Gambia. The Gambia plans to vaccinate the whole of its 1- to 29-year-old population this year (1.2 million people) while Ethiopia will introduce the vaccine in three consecutive phases, starting with about 20 million individuals this fall. Counting Nigeria and Sudan, more than 45 million people are expected to receive MenAfriVac in 2013, bringing the total number of vaccinees in the African meningitis belt to more than 150 million since the vaccine was first introduced in 2010. Developed through MVP, MenAfriVac is manufactured at Serum Institute of India Ltd.
- Bimonthly multipartner teleconferences conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) Intercountry Support Team (IST) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, prepare the way for vaccine introduction by addressing a variety of issues relevant to MenAfriVac rollout in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, and The Gambia later this year. Teleconference participants include representatives from the ministries of health in the concerned countries, Agence de Médecine Préventive and Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) in Paris, France; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Seattle, USA; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, USA; the GAVI Alliance in Geneva, Switzerland; MVP and PATH in Ferney-Voltaire, France; UNICEF HQ in New York, USA; UNICEF West and Central Africa Office in Dakar, Senegal; UNICEF Supply division in Copenhagen, Denmark; UNICEF country offices in the concerned countries, WHO HQ in Geneva, WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Congo; WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean in Cairo, Egypt; WHO IST/Central Africa in Libreville, Gabon; WHO IST/Eastern and Southern Africa in Harare, Zimbabwe; and WHO country offices in the concerned countries. Among the topics discussed are coordination and planning of the mass campaigns, vaccine supply, logistics, cold chain and waste disposal management, pharmacovigilance, vaccine registration, social mobilization and advocacy, training and supervision of health workers, and resource mobilization.
- MVP's resource mobilization efforts have led to more than US\$3 million being raised for vaccine rollout in 2013: The Swiss Philanthropy Foundation has pledged US\$2.5 million to support vaccine introduction in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, and The Gambia; while The National Philanthropic Trust has committed an additional US\$750,000 to support the mass campaigns in Ethiopia.
- Representatives from WHO IST conducted advocacy visits in Ethiopia and The Gambia to support vaccine introduction activities in the countries. The IST team also made country visits to the five countries that will introduce MenAfriVac in 2014 (Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, South Sudan, Togo). The main purpose of the visits was to meet with health officials, advocate for the introduction of MenAfriVac, conduct appraisals of in-country technical capabilities, guide national authorities in their district prioritization exercises for vaccine introduction in 2014, and support countries in their application for GAVI funds.

- The MVP Management Committee had a meeting on June 13 at WHO HQ in Geneva. Senior MVP staff presented the project's progress so far and discussed the strategy for the coming months with WHO and PATH committee members. Special focus was put on the integration of MenAfriVac into the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) and on the transition of vaccine introduction activities after the project's scheduled close-out in December 2014.
- MVP staff made presentations at several meetings, including the International Congress of Meningeal Diseases Vaccine 2013 (Varadero, Cuba, May 19–24); the Innovation and Access to Medicines Humanitarian Conference (MSF, Copenhagen, Denmark, May 31); the Decade of R&D for Neglected Diseases in Africa Meeting (Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative, Nairobi, Kenya, June 4–5); and the Partnering for Vaccine Emerging Markets Meeting (Phacilitate, Berlin, Germany, June 10–12).

### Surveillance and epidemic preparedness activities

- On June 6, WHO published a [report](#) on the 2013 epidemic season in the African meningitis belt indicating that the number of meningitis cases during this past season was at the lowest level in a decade. The decrease is thought to be due to the progressive introduction of MenAfriVac in the belt. MVP Project Director, Dr. Marie-Pierre Préziosi discussed these findings in a radio interview for Channel Africa Radio on June 7. This interview is available [here](#).
- A joint mission by CDC and WHO IST visited Nigeria on April 8–12 to evaluate existing surveillance and laboratory capabilities. An action plan for case-based surveillance of meningococcal meningitis was finalized for three sentinel sites; and the local surveillance staff harmonized procedures for data collection, input, and management. Following the meeting, a decision was made to install a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) machine in the country for better laboratory confirmation of meningitis.

### Clinical activities

- The following seven clinical trials related to licensing and prequalification of MenAfriVac for use in 1- to 29-year olds and/or infants have been successfully completed:
  - Phase 1 [PsA-TT-001](#) study in India.
  - Phase 2 [PsA-TT-002](#) study in Mali and the Gambia.
  - Phase 2/3 [PsA-TT-003](#) study in Mali, Senegal, and the Gambia.
  - Phase 2/3 [PsA-TT-003a](#) study in India.
  - Phase 2 [PsA-TT-004](#) study in Ghana.
  - Phase 3 [PsA-TT-005](#) study in India.
  - Phase 3 [PsA-TT-006](#) study in Mali.
- The [PsA-TT-007](#) study at Center for Vaccine Development-Mali is continuing to progress well. This phase 3 clinical study evaluates the immunogenicity and safety of different schedules and formulations of the meningococcal A conjugate vaccine administered concomitantly with local EPI vaccines in 1,500 healthy infants and toddlers. The security situation in Bamako has been relatively stable, and the study is on course to be completed by summer 2013 as planned.
- The study report for the [persistence study](#) is being prepared. The persistence study followed up subjects from the PsA-TT-002 and PsA-TT-003 studies to determine the level of antibody persistence up to 5 years after vaccination in toddlers, children, and young adults. The results of this study will help inform decision making on a vaccination schedule that will ensure protection for the populations living in Africa's meningitis belt.

That's all for now from the MVP team. Stay tuned for our next news digest in three months' time.

We look forward to receiving your comments at [info@meningvax.org](mailto:info@meningvax.org).

Created in 2001, the Meningitis Vaccine Project is a partnership between WHO and PATH. The mission of MVP is to eliminate epidemic meningitis as a public health problem in sub-Saharan Africa through the development, testing, introduction, and widespread use of conjugate meningococcal vaccines.

For more information on MVP, please visit our website at <http://www.meningvax.org>.