

## MEDICINES FOR MALARIA VENTURE AIMS TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE, AFFORDABLE ANTI-MALARIAL DRUGS



*Along with tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, malaria is one of the major infectious diseases responsible for significant illness and mortality around the world. Malaria is a public health problem today in more than 90 countries inhabited by a total of 2400 million people – 40 per cent of the world's population. Worldwide prevalence of the disease is estimated to be in the order of 300 to 500 million clinical cases each year. For some years, we have been involved in malaria control programs through our operations in Africa and Brazil, two areas where the disease has a devastating impact. We are now also supporting the Medicines for Malaria Venture, which has been established through the World Health Organisation with the aim of developing affordable anti-malarial drugs for people in the disease-endemic countries.*

Malaria, which has reached epidemic proportions in many regions of the world, continues to spread unchecked. Although it is a curable disease if promptly diagnosed and properly treated, malaria still kills more than one million people every year and causes developmental problems in many more. In absolute numbers, malaria kills 3000 children under five years of age per day. One child dies from malaria every 30 seconds.

### The tragic effect of malaria in Africa

In Africa today, there are more cases of malaria than at any time in recorded history. Fighting the disease accounts for about 40 per cent of public health spending and is one of the main factors retarding the continent's economic growth; it costs more than US\$12 billion in lost GDP every year. The morbidity and mortality associated with malaria make it difficult for people to overcome poverty. Malaria-related expenses claim up to 30 per cent of the entire household expenditure among the very poor.

African children under five years of age are chronic victims of malaria, suffering an average of six bouts a year. If untreated, malaria can kill children within 24 hours after symptoms develop. In those children who survive, malaria also drains vital nutrients, impairing their physical and intellectual development. Malarial sickness is one of the principal reasons for poor school attendance.

### A threat to sustainable development

For the Company, malaria is a significant health issue in southern Mozambique and northern Brazil where our operations are located. The disease can impact on the ability of these regions to provide sustainable workforces. The health of employees can also affect productivity and safety.

To maintain an adequate and healthy workforce for our operations, and to assist in the development and general well-being of our host communities, we have a strong history of involvement in malaria control programs. Not the least of these is our collaboration in the extensive spraying program conducted throughout Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa, which has helped to dramatically reduce the local incidence of malaria.

The biggest challenge facing malaria control is widespread drug resistance. The cheap, widely available drugs such as chloroquine and sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine are now ineffective. While the malaria parasite was making a quiet comeback beginning in the late 1970s, funds for malaria research and development dried up. During the past 30 years, only three anti-malarial drugs have been developed, and they are all prophylactics designed for the military and wealthy travellers, not the rural poor.



► Early diagnosis is emphasised in malaria control programs

There is an urgent need for the development of new anti-malarial drugs that are effective against the growing tide of resistant malaria and are also cost-effective to produce in numbers sufficient to service underprivileged communities.

### Medicines for Malaria Venture

The Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) is an organisation set up in 1999 to develop safe, effective and affordable drugs to treat malaria and reduce the burden of the disease. A non-profit organisation linked to the World Health Organisation, MMV is currently managing the largest-ever portfolio of anti-malarial drug research. The rapid progress of its projects can be attributed to MMV's pioneering collaborations with nearly 40 public and private institutions around the world. Pharmaceutical, biotech and research institute partners contribute their know-how, staff and facilities to individual projects, while MMV's Expert Scientific Advisory Committee helps the MMV staff to manage the portfolio as a whole. Thanks to this pooling of knowledge, talent and resources, the costs of developing new malaria treatments are being significantly reduced. MMV is bringing the goal of effective and affordable treatments for all one step closer to becoming a reality.

Commenting on our partnership program, Dr Chris Hentschel, Chief Executive Officer of MMV, said, 'BHP Billiton is already making a significant difference in the communities they operate in by supporting malaria control programs. Now with their support for MMV to develop new anti-malarial 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'.

At an MMV stakeholders meeting in May 2004, His Excellency Joaquim Chissano, President of Mozambique, stated, 'I am pleased to know that BHP Billiton will become a partner and financier of MMV. BHPB is the biggest economic partner of Mozambique. They are already very active in supporting programs such as the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI), which was established to control malaria infections in local communities of Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland. In many areas of LSDI, malaria infections have already been reduced by 50 per cent . . . One day our children will be born free from malaria. With our determination and perseverance, that future is attainable'.

We are among the first small group of global transnational companies invited to become corporate supporters of the Medicines for Malaria Venture. Our plan to provide financial support to this worthwhile initiative over the next three years further extends our involvement in the fight against malaria on a global scale.