



**World Health
Organization**

AFRICAN REGION

**African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC)
Programme africain de Lutte contre l'Onchocercose**

01 B.P. 549, Ouagadougou 01, Burkina Faso

Tel: (226) 50 34 29 53; 50 34 29 59; 50 34 29 60; 50 34 36 45/46

Fax: (226) 50342875; 50343647



URGENT PRESS RELEASE

Health Experts Discuss Teaching of Community Participation in Medical Schools

Nairobi, Kenya/1 November 2010 – Vice-chancellors, deans of faculties and other senior academics of universities and health institutions from 11 East and Southern African countries will meet in Nairobi **3-5 November 2010** to discuss the introduction of community-directed intervention (CDI) strategy into the curricula of medical and nursing schools in the region.

For over 13 years, the World Health Organization African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (WHO/APOC) and partners have used the simple and cost-effective CDI tool to contain the skin disfiguring and blinding disease also known as river blindness in Africa. The strategy empowers communities to take leadership role in determining their own health outcomes thereby strengthening the health systems through bottom-up approach. Recent research results have shown that it is not only effective in river blindness control but is also useful in the delivery of multiple health interventions.

Using the CDI strategy, more than 800,000 trained community drug distributors are treating over 60 million people in more than 146,000 communities in 15 countries annually with ivermectin, a safe drug for the treatment of the disease. The drug is donated by the pharmaceutical company Merck & Co Inc. The interventions by WHO/APOC and partners have resulted in drastic reduction of prevalence of river blindness in the continent where more than 120 million people are at risk in 30 endemic countries.

WHO/APOC has in collaboration with the West African Health Organization (WAHO) and the Regional Institute for Public Health of the Republic of Benin, developed a draft curriculum and training module based on a training manual being used in WHO/APOC Programme area.

The three-day meeting at the **Laico Regency hotel** in the Kenyan capital is part of ongoing efforts by WHO/APOC, a pro-poor regional disease control programme and partners to expand knowledge about the CDI strategy and generate sustainable expertise for its adoption by other health programmes. The objective is to encourage stakeholders to leverage the synergies between health and education sectors for effective delivery of Primary Health Care services and contribute towards the attainment of health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in resource-poor settings.

Kenya's Public Health and Sanitation Minister, senior WHO officials and representatives of Non-governmental Organizations (NGDO) partners are expected to address the meeting, co-facilitated by the WHO Country Office, Kenya and WHO/APOC. Senior academics from Angola, Burundi, Kenya, Namibia, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe will be in attendance.

At a similar meeting in Abuja, Nigeria in 2009, representatives of 18 universities from 12 West and Central African countries revised and adopted the draft curriculum and training module developed by WHO/APOC and partners, and agreed to introduce the CDI strategy in their schools' curricula. More information on WHO/APOC @ www.who.int/apoc