

In their own words



Mahamat Mamadou Addy,
Secretary of State for Health for Chad

Despite periodic events that disturb the socio-economic fabric of our country and even our health system there are encouraging results in oncho control. We commend APOC and the Mectizan Donation Programme for their support. We are convinced that, today; elimination of onchocerciasis is possible in my country.

We know that if treatment with ivermectin is a wide range preventive measure that guarantees that future generations will not run the risk of becoming blind due to onchocerciasis, there are unfortunately thousands of our countrymen and women who are already blind though not because of onchocerciasis. It is our duty to be concerned about the future of these people.

We also know that several donors, international and non governmental humanitarian organizations are interested in this problem. We would like to request that you approach these institutions on our behalf so that they will include Chad in their action plans. We are determined to meet this big challenge for the socio-economic development of our country depends on it.



Mrs Maria Carvalho Empis,
Gulbenkian Foundation

Considering the results that ex-OCP and APOC countries have been getting since the beginning of the implementation of both OCP and APOC programmes, I think that Gulbenkian Foundation must be proud to have been supporting oncho control activities until 2007.

A re-orientation of Gulbenkian Foundation health strategy as regards development aid and co-operation with Portuguese-speaking African countries and East Timor focused on the promotion of 'Maternal and Child Health', 'Infectious Diseases' and 'Human Resources Development' as the main areas for project support, and this led to an interruption of financing for APOC activities.

Given the current global focus on the control of neglected tropical diseases (NTD) and how this can contribute to better health indicators in developing countries, the Gulbenkian Foundation is already providing support to the development of human resources for health in NTDs at post-doctoral level. We have also established, and created a Health Research Center for NTDs in the Province of Bengo, Caxito Municipality, in Angola. At community level, Gulbenkian Foundation may in the near future consider restarting its support for APOC CDTI activities.



Mrs Maimouna Diop Ly
Senior Public Health Analyst,
African Development Bank

Question: What difference do you think your contribution has made to the control programme?

Answer: Let me start by saying that in a programme co-financed by several partners it is difficult to attribute the results to only one partner. It is nevertheless important to underscore that the African Development Bank Group has been funding onchocerciasis control since 1975. The bank's contribution to OCP was 7.5 million Units of Account. Later the bank's contributions to APOC phase I (1996-2001) rose to 2.0 million Units of account.

Approved in July 2008, 15 million Units of Account equivalent to 23 million USD for the period 2008-2015 we are engaged. This substantial increase by the ADF was deemed necessary to strengthen phasing-out activities. This contribution from ADF is considered to have made a great difference since it filled the financing gap required for the phasing out stage.

The contribution also helped in the implementation of activities such as: i) enhanced CDTI activities; ii) co-implementation of multiple health interventions; iii) reinforcement of implementation of CDTI activities in post conflict countries; iv) capacity building; v) monitoring & evaluation, surveillance and research; In addition, ADF contributions have contributed to gender mainstreaming in the APOC.

Research activities have led to a paradigm shift of the programme moving from control to elimination. Finally ADF contributions have contributed to poverty reduction in the affected countries, in line with the ADF mandate.



Mrs Francisca Olamiju,
Executive Director,
MITOSATH

Question: what difference do you think MITOSATH contribution has made to the oncho control programme?

Answer: Ours is a success story in the fight against river blindness in all the communities we have intervened over the years; from one LGA in 1996 to twelve LGAs in year 2005 and a further intervention into Lagos and Ondo States in Nigeria, respectively. There is a cumulative treatment of over 8 million, and capacity building of 18,000 different categories of health personnel.

MITOSATH'S annual treatment now stands at over 1.5 million in the prevention of river blindness. These heights have been made possible through the kindness and continuous support of donors and partners who continue to support these ideals especially our Grand Patron General TY Danjuma, Board of Trustees, Merck & Co. GlaxoSmith-Kline, Pfizer and our employees

16th session of the Joint Action Forum



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**JAF 16 ENDS
IN ABUJA**



**JAF 17 WILL BE HOSTED BY
KUWAIT FUND IN 2011**

In their own words



*Mr. Alim Hayatou,
Minister of State for Health of Cameroon*

Since 1996 Cameroon has been participating in all the sessions of the Joint Action Forum of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control.

Cameroon believes in the APOC programme. I hereby reaffirm that Cameroon is fully committed, determined and willing to work towards elimination of the infection and interruption of the transmission of onchocerciasis in the whole country.



*H. E. Hassan Alattas,
Director General (Metech
Department) the Saudi
Fund for Development*

Question: Could you describe your partnership with APOC in river blindness control efforts in Africa?

Answer: Saudi Arabia was one of the early supporters of the program. Based on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Policy to provide development assistance to those who need it, the Saudi Fund for development, the main channel of the Saudi government assistance, has allocated more than U.S 45 million for programme.

In addition, the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) is providing soft loans to develop the areas that are being freed from the disease to finance infrastructure projects like roads, health centers, education, electricity and agriculture projects.

The Saudi assistance to the program has helped African countries to improve their capacity building in the health sector and give hope to millions of people across the African continent.

The Saudi Assistance will continue until the River Blindness is history, and we are proud that we are part of the unique partnership that characterizes this program.

**COMMENT FROM MERCK'S PRESIDENT & CHAIRMAN
MR. RICHARD CLARK**

"The African Program for Onchocerciasis control has helped tens of millions of people fight river blindness by enabling delivery of Mectizan. The program focus on building capacity and creating a sustainable healthy future. We congratulate APOC on this 15th anniversary, and look forward to continuing our collaboration in the years ahead"



*Sam Ifeagwu, Senior Officer,
OFID, Vienna, Austria.*

Question: What is the relationship between OPEC FUND and APOC? How do you evaluate APOC?

Answer: The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) is an inter-governmental organization of countries which, themselves, are largely also developing.

We are, thus, fully familiar with the pains and needs of the developing world. Indeed, a primary focus of OFID is the Africa Region. Most of the countries we work with are African countries. And in the years ahead, our Management under the leadership of Suleiman J. Al-Herbish (Saudi) expects to do even more for the continent.

OFID is pleased at the successes and continuing accomplishments of APOC. We are proud of our association with this well-managed programme. We are also proud of the great role our major Member Countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait in particular) are playing in APOC.

This JAF16 was impressive. It was business-like, efficient and results-oriented. I certainly was honored and humbled to be part of it.



*Dr Michel Pacque, Senior Technical Adviser
for Neglected Tropical Diseases*

USAID has been a long time supporter (and donor) of Onchocerciasis Control in Africa.

The support for the Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) has over the last years received more interest from the American Congress with an increase in the budget for the support to National Programs for Integrated NTD Control Programs.

By integrating the control activities for several NTDs which affect the poorest of the poor, savings can be made, which means more efficient programs and being able to treat more people.

USAID believes that if APOC continues to integrate multiple NTDs in its CDI approach big health gains can be made.

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*Honourable Minister of Health and Social
Welfare, Tanzania*

Question: How is Onchocerciasis Control going on in Tanzania?

Answer: Apart from all the efforts the Ministry is making, there is still a remarkable gap in terms of Human Resources (technical support), equipments and financial support that will enable acceleration of elimination efforts. We, as a country have a feeling that we will still need more support beyond 2015 to enable us reach elimination. Most of our projects are young and due to very high baseline prevalence and failure of vector control, onchocerciasis elimination in our country will take longer.

It is important that we sustain the gains made but also focus on elimination. We already have a strong integrated NTD program, therefore, we will position ourselves to ensure that the Onchocerciasis program succeed.



Peter Ackland, CEO, IAPB

Vision 2020 is an important global health initiative to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020.

The initiative was launched in 1999 by the WHO and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, an umbrella body representing 111 NGOs and professional bodies involved in promoting eye health.

Of the eight major eye conditions that vision 2020 targets, two – onchocerciasis and trachoma – are also part of the focus upon NTDs.

WHO estimated there are some 286 million people worldwide who are blind or have a severe visual impairment. 80% of this is avoidable, either through prevention or treatment. Without Vision 2020 programmes this figure would be much larger. Over the past 10 years there has been a significant decline in the prevalence of people blinded by cataract, trachoma and onchocerciasis. Undoubtedly, the work of APOC and the NGDO, government and donor partners has made a major contribution to reducing global blindness. But, it has also demonstrated how community directed programmes can be a decisive tool in the promotion of public health. Certainly the Vision 2020 programme has much to learn from the success of onchocerciasis control programmes.



APOC TCC chair salutes Amazigo
Current APOC Technical Consultative Committee (TCC) Chairman Prof Mammoun Homeida, has paid glowing tribute to out-going APOC director Dr Uche Amazigo describing her as "a woman of courage, patience and guided by a clear focus, vision and dedicated to her cause."
"I knew her over 16 years, travelled with her to many countries," said Prof. Homeida, who was a member of the 1st TCC (1996), served as chairman in the past and is now back to lead the committee in the elimination phase of APOC.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 16th session of the Joint Action Forum (JAF), the governing board of APOC meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, he described Dr Amazigo as "emotional when it comes to protecting the community and in support of women, adding: "Uche is the pride of Africa."

Prof Homeida is President, University of Medical Sciences & Technology Khartoum, Sudan. He has participated in many WHO TDR Committees as Consultant and is a former Director of the Onchocerciasis Control Programme in Sudan.

The TCC, comprising scientists with expertise in river blindness control, provides technical guidance to the APOC programme. The APOC Committee of Sponsoring Agencies (CSA) and the World Bank, on Wednesday presented Dr Amazigo with gifts as a mark of appreciation for her contributions to river blindness control and support for the poor.



*Mr Michael W. Marine,
Sabin Vaccine Institute/
Global Network for neglected
tropical diseases*

I attended this meeting to learn more about APOC's activities, Onchocerciasis Control and elimination is a core objective of the Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases, a program of the Sabin Vaccine Institute.

The Global Network strongly advocates that endemic countries integrate their onchocerciasis control programs into a comprehensive network approach covering all seven of the most common NTD's.

Based on discussions here this week, it is apparent that there is a growing consensus in support of country Integrated programs, a development we welcome.

We also applaud the growing partnership between APOC and AFRO which will be key to achieving true scale up of NTD control and elimination programs.