APOC Planning workshop for well-defined objectives

From January 29 to 31, 2013, was held in Ouagadougou, a planning workshop for the APOC Programme staff. This third such meeting aimed to consolidate the planning of the year 2013 activities by integrating to the extent possible, the implementation of the decisions and recommendations made by APOC’s statutory bodies and partner organizations.

At the opening session, Dr. Chris Ngenda Mwikisa, APOC Director, welcomed the participants and stressed that given the current global economic crisis in which donors are faced with budgetary constraints, APOC needed to redouble its efforts in order to persuade them with hard evidence of the feasibility of onchocerciasis elimination in Africa.

In his turn, Dr. Laurent Yaméogo, APOC Director’s Office Coordinator, presented the objectives and expected outcomes of the workshop and said that this year, particular attention would be given to monitoring of the implementation of planned activities.

The participants were then split into three groups representing the three units of the Programme, namely the Administration unit (COD), the Sustainable Drug Distribution unit (SDD), and the Epidemiology and Vector Elimination unit (EVE), to reflect on the agenda items, such as: detailed plans per unit for the implementation of the decisions and recommendations made by the statutory bodies of the Programme and partner organizations; review of unit specific action plans in reference to the 2013 Plan of Action and Budget of the Programme by priority area and according to the funds available; identification of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the Programme with respect to a successful implementation of the 2013 Plan of Action and Budget and of the decisions and recommendations of the statutory bodies of the Programme; strategies and plans for resource mobilization; and budget allocations in the GSM.

After three days of reflection, the participants separated, with the satisfaction of having achieved most of their goals. It was agreed that the elaborated plans would be refined during the upcoming planning meetings of the Executive Committee and of the respective units. ♦ Antoinette Ilboudo, Secretary/CAQ/APOC

The Onchocerciasis Control Programme honored by the Government of Benin through the decoration of Dr. Laurent Yaméogo for services rendered to the nation of Benin

On Sunday January 27, 2013, the city of Madjre, in the commune of Dogbo, was abuzz on the occasion of the celebration of the 60th World Leprosy Day. Fourteen health workers were to be decorated, including Dr. Laurent Yaméogo, Programme Manager and Coordinator of the Office of the Director of APOC, who received the medal of Officer of the Order of Merit of Benin.

Early in the morning, many dignitaries from Cotonou as well as the prefecture of Mono / Couffo and surrounding areas had flocked to Madjre to attend this celebration organized by the Ministry of Health of Benin.

Summary

| APOC staff retreat for a successful year | 1 |
| Decoration: A medal for services rendered to the nation of Benin | 1 & 2 |
| Budget and Finance Department: A start at full steam | 2 |
| News from our partners: Good results obtained in eight CDTI project in Côte d’Ivoire | 3 |
| MDSC: A language translator learning about DNA analyzes | 3 |
| Family spirit: News from the APOC Family | 4 |
| Farewell to Doctors Koroma and Leal | |
| Births column | |
| Obituary | |
During the mass celebrated by Bishop Victor Agbanou, Bishop of Lokossa Diocese, those in attendance included: the administrative and political authorities of the region; a large number of leprosy patients and their families; Mr Justin Adanmavokin Sossou, Secretary General of the Ministry of Health, representing the Minister of Health, Professor A. Kinde Gazzard - on mission outside the country; Dr. Y. Gamatié, WHO Representative in Benin; Mr Alfred Houdote, representing the Grand Chancellor of National Orders; officials from the central and regional health services; Dr. Wilfrid Bacho, Coordinator of the National communicable Diseases Control Programme; the decoration recipients and their families; the populations of Madjré and surrounding areas.

Among the various speeches made at the end of the religious ceremony, the representative of the Minister of Health praised the work of the recipients or their organizations, while urging them, as well as all those involved, to continue their dedication to the cause of neglected tropical diseases. The same message was reiterated by the Grand Chancellor, with the hope that this recognition would serve as an example for all the health service family for the benefit of the populations. Subsequently, the representative of the Grand Chancellor of National Orders proceeded with the presentation of the decorations to the recipients, then some presents were given to the leprosy patients by charitable organizations such as the Raoul Follereau Foundations of France, Luxembourg and Benin.

In the same evening in Cotonou, the WHO Representative and some members of his team, representatives of the Ministry of Health of Benin, including the Coordinator of the National communicable Diseases Control Programme, former members of the National Onchocerciasis Control team, as well as three members of the family of Dr. Yaméogo gathered around a cocktail party to express their joy. The WHO Representative reiterated his congratulations to Dr. Yaméogo before the latter expressed his gratitude to WHO and to all his colleagues who facilitated the obtaining of this award which he dedicated to the WHO, the organization that placed its trust in him, to the whole ONCHO family and especially to those who lost their lives working for the success of the Programme, and finally, to his dear wife who patiently accepted his long and multiple absences from home during his field activities. He promised to continue the noble fight for the reduction of the suffering of the poorest populations.

♦ Dr. Laurent Yaméogo, Programme Manager, APOC Director’s Office Coordinator

♦ Abdou Salam S. Bin (center) and the staff of the APOC financial service

♦ The end and the beginning of each year are the key moments of any financial service. APOC’s Budget and Finance Department was no exception to the rule. Thus, three major activities marked the first weeks of 2013.

♦ The consolidation and review of the past year’s financial transactions had the lion’s share among these activities. Thus, the Department benefited from a successful collaboration with the WHO World Service Centre (WSC) based in Kuala Lumpur which authorized Mr. Abdul Salam Bin Suhaizat to perform a two-week mission to APOC headquarters in Ouagadougou.

♦ The spirit of collaboration which is the key to the success of APOC was also expressed in a joint mission by the APOC Management and SightSavers, represented respectively by Mrs. Antoinette Assagwe and Mr. Peter Osei to Ghana where financial transactions of the previous years were reviewed. The purpose was to certify the expenditures incurred during the last three years by the National Onchocerciasis Control programme in Ghana and to update the national programme on APOC’s administrative and financial rules and procedures before the disbursement of the funds provided for its activities in 2013.

♦ Finally, the plans of action and budgets (PAB) submitted by the 120 CDTI projects and programmes of the NOTFs of 21 endemic countries and / or countries implementing field activities were reviewed by APOC Professional Staff. It showed that over 63% of these PABs had been approved through direct financial cooperation agreements signed or finalized for the disbursement of the first tranches of funds for their field activities to be implemented in 2013. Other agreements are in the process of being initiated for the disbursement of funds during the first quarter of the year. Based on these PAB reviews, one notes a growing number of applications for renewal of project equipment, despite the limited amount earmarked for this budget item during this period of transition of the Programme toward the elimination of onchocerciasis.

♦ Benoit Koffi Agblewounou, Budget and Finance Officer / APOC
The review meeting of CDTI activities carried out in 2012 in Côte d’Ivoire was held on January 17 and 18, 2013, in Abidjan. It brought together 32 participants from the DSCMP, the National Eye Health and Onchocerciasis Control Programme (PNSO-LO), the NGDO Sightsavers, the Regional and Departmental Directorates, as well as the focal points of the eight districts, namely Ferkesédougou Ouangelodougou, Agnibiliéro, Bétité, Abengourou, Grand-Bassam, Adiaké and Aboisso, all located in the river basin of the Comoé.

During this workshop funded by the NGDO Sightsavers, with logistical support from WHO / APOC, the participants reviewed and validated the onchocerciasis control activities, including CDTI, in 8 districts of Côte d’Ivoire, initiated in September 2012. A candid analysis of the results of each district was made, listing the strengths, weaknesses and constraints in the implementation of CDTI activities. Although partial, the results show that therapeutic coverage by health area varies between 62% and 85%. In terms of geographical coverage in the eight districts, it is at 100%, all the communities of the concerned health areas having been treated. Participants noted the excellent results achieved by three districts whose experience was shared to improve the implementation of CDTI in other districts showing poor results. The effective supervision by the PNSO-LO during ivermectin distribution was also recognized as a contributing factor to the improvement of therapeutic coverage.

Dr. Marie Madeleine Kouakou Ilunga, Chief Coordinator of PNSO-LO and Mrs. Christelly Badila, Technical Assistant Sightsavers Côte d’Ivoire

What for? One would be tempted to ask. Dr. Kima Raogo, TRAD / APOC, who recently visited the DNA laboratory of the MDSC had a good reason for doing so. He had requested the visit "to better understand the process of pool screening of the samples of blackflies collected by the APOC CDTI projects." He was also concerned about the clarification of certain concepts and terminologies used in research and onchocerciasis surveillance activities related to the work of the laboratory. Thus he was able to visually follow the "pool screening" of blackflies, the PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) process, and other laboratory analysis techniques. He then watched a blackfly and infective larvae of Onchocerca volvulus through a microscope.

This visit was also of interest to the laboratory technicians who were happy to explain their work in situ in the laboratory, for a better understanding of the terms and concepts translated in the various publications on onchocerciasis research and entomological surveillance in the APOC member countries.

This initiative is to be encouraged and suggests that such visits could also be beneficial to the staff of the various units of APOC. Dr. Gilles Aimé Adjami, Laboratory Specialist, Molecular Parasitologist / MDSC
Departure of Dr Koroma and Dr. Leak: A large void in SDD

Dr. Joseph Brima Koroma, Technical Officer of SDD since March 2012, left APOC on December 31, 2012 at the end of his contract. He now works in Accra for the END project of Family Health International (FHI 360) as the technical advisor to Burkina Faso, Niger, Sierra Leone, Togo and Ghana. It is a project for the control of five neglected tropical diseases.

As for Dr. Stephen Leak, he retired on January 31, 2013, after four years of good and faithful service to the APOC Programme as Officer in charge of operational research. To each of the two, the SDD staff expressed their gratitude and noted the "large void" left in the unit. As a souvenir, small token gifts were presented to them.

The WHO Staff Association in Burkina Faso (ASOB) also hailed the dedication and commitment to hard work of Dr. Leak during a farewell ceremony organized by the members of the Association on January 28, 2013, in the APOC conference room.

Emma Kalsany, Secretary, COP / APOC

Births column:
Mr. Joseph Ouedraogo, Assistant / Supply, APOC, is the proud father of a baby boy born on January 30, 2013 in Ouagadougou.
Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Ouedraogo!

Obituary:
• Mr. Fortey Antoine Kuma Agbéwéoanou, brother of M. K. Benoît Agblewonu, BFO, APOC, on December 26, 2013, in Lomé.
• Mr. Paul Savadogo Honoré, brother of Mrs. Ida Savadogo, AA / PER, APOC, on January 13, 2013, in Leo.
• Mrs. Suzanne Kaboré-Ilboudo, mother of Mrs. Antoinette Nana, SEC / CAO, APOC, on January 31, 2013, in Ouagadougou.
• Mr. Sawadogo N. Bernard, father of Mrs. Josephine Tapsoba, Nurse at ISTWA, on January 31, 2013, in Ouagadougou.
• Mr. Soden Nyadongo, father-in-law of Mr. Siwombé, ITO, APOC, on January 13, 2013, in Mutare, Zimbabwe.
• Mrs. Angèle Mandzoungou, staff member of the WHO Office, Brazzaville, retired in 2012, on February 15, 2013, in Brazzaville.
• Mr. Jean-Marie Olinga Olinga, Data manager of the WHO Office, Cameroon, on February 7, 2013, in Yaoundé.
• Mr. Thomas Essombe Ndedi, Administrative officer in the WHO Office, Nairobi, retired in 2011, on February 19, 2013, in Yaoundé.

Our sincere condolences to the families of the deceased.

Emma Kalsany, Secrétaire, COP/APOC