



Yemen eliminates lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis)

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MSD (trade name of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, N.J., USA), GSK, and the Mectizan Donation Program congratulate the government, and the people of Yemen for receiving validation by the World Health Organization (WHO) for eliminating lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem. This remarkable achievement has alleviated suffering for hundreds of thousands and highlights the perseverance of many dedicated partners.

Lymphatic filariasis (LF), commonly known as elephantiasis, is a debilitating disease caused by a parasite transmitted to humans through the bites of mosquitoes. According to WHO, elephantiasis is found in 72 countries around the world with an estimated 120 million people infected. Long-term, chronic infection causes damage to the lymphatic system, and severe and irreversible swelling to the limbs, breasts, and/or genitals. These symptoms cause extreme discomfort and social stigmatization.

In countries like Yemen where elephantiasis and another parasitic disease called river blindness are co-endemic, WHO recommends co-administering two medicines, albendazole and ivermectin to achieve LF elimination. A WHO resolution to achieve this goal was established by the World Health Assembly in Geneva in 1997. In 1998, GSK announced the donation of albendazole for the elimination of elephantiasis and MSD expanded its donation of Mectizan® (ivermectin) through the Mectizan Donation Program to include the elimination of LF in countries where the disease co-exists with river blindness. In 2017, in support of new WHO guidelines, MSD's donation of Mectizan was once again expanded to provide an additional 100 million treatments per year through 2025 to support the elimination of LF globally, in countries where onchocerciasis is not endemic. Since 1999 GSK has donated over 7 billion doses of albendazole through the WHO to support efforts to end LF in 65 endemic countries. MSD has donated over 3.1 billion doses to control and eliminate river blindness and LF.

"We celebrate this important achievement with the government, healthcare workers, and the people of Yemen," said Ms. Carmen Villar, Vice President for Social Business and Innovation at MSD. "Lymphatic filariasis is a debilitating, but preventable disease that affects individuals, families and communities. We will continue working with our partners to eliminate LF globally and help improve the lives of tens of millions of people round the world."

Dr. Mark Bradley, GSK's Director, Tropical Disease Programmes, Global Health commented: "The elimination of lymphatic filariasis from Yemen is a huge achievement and demonstrates what is possible through partnership and commitment in addressing global health challenges. We are very proud of the role GSK is playing in the steady elimination of this hugely debilitating disease. We

have committed to donate approximately 600 million albendazole treatments to WHO each year until LF is eliminated as a public health problem globally.”

The Mectizan Donation Program’s director, Dr. Yao Sodahlon, an expert in tropical diseases who worked closely over the years with the ministry of health and other partners to ensure Yemen’s success stated “I am thrilled that Yemen has eliminated lymphatic filariasis. Both the political situation and the geographical terrain are huge barriers to getting the medicines to everyone who needs them. Yemen’s commitment to achieve this milestone is evidence that, with political will and strong partnerships, elimination can be achieved. The ministry of health must be congratulated for their dedication to ensuring the medications were consistently delivered to the hundreds of thousands of people at-risk of infection.”

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### About GSK

GSK is a science-led global healthcare company with a special purpose: to help people do more, feel better and live longer. We have 3 global businesses that discover, develop and manufacture innovative pharmaceutical medicines, vaccines and consumer healthcare products.

Our work in global health is science-led, sustainable for our business and focused for impact. Each year over 5 million children die under the age of five, most from preventable diseases and in developing countries. We want to help change that by focusing our science on three of the world’s biggest health challenges – HIV, TB and malaria.

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### About the Mectizan Donation Program

The Mectizan Donation Program (MDP) was established in 1987 to provide medical, technical and administrative oversight of the donation of Mectizan by MSD for the treatment of river blindness, also known as onchocerciasis. In 1998, MDP expanded its mandate to include oversight of the donation of albendazole by GSK for the elimination of lymphatic filariasis in onchocerciasis co-endemic areas.

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### About MSD

For more than a century, MSD, a leading global biopharmaceutical company, has been inventing for life, bringing forward medicines and vaccines for the world’s most challenging diseases. MSD is a trade name of Merck & Co., Inc., with headquarters in Kenilworth, N.J., U.S.A. Through our prescription medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies and animal health products, we work with customers and operate in more than 140 countries to deliver innovative health solutions. We also

demonstrate our commitment to increasing access to health care through far-reaching policies, programmes and partnerships. Today, MSD continues to be at the forefront of research to advance the prevention and treatment of diseases that threaten people and communities around the world.

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