

Local power - global change

Celebrating the Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis in Togo



Dr. Gilbert Burnham, Mectizan Expert Committee chair, awards plaque to Togo's Hon. Minister of Health, Moustafa Mijiyawa, and Victoire Tomegah Dogbé, Hon. Minister of Grassroots Development and Cabinet Director of the President

The Mectizan Donation Program (MDP) held the 62nd Mectizan Expert Committee meeting in Lomé, Togo in October to celebrate Togo as the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to eliminate lymphatic filariasis (LF).

MDP hosted a reception and dinner, which was attended by a number of government officials and partners from Togo and the Togolese press. The Minister of Health, Professor Moustafa Mijiyawa and the Minister of Grassroots Development and Cabinet Director of the President, were presented with the inaugural Lymphatic Filariasis Elimination Award presented by Mectizan Expert Committee chair, Professor Gilbert Burnham. During his remarks, Hon. Minister Mijiyawa thanked the current and former ministry of health staff for their steadfast commitment from 1998 when Togo became one of the first countries to map LF, to 2000 when mass treatment with Mectizan and albendazole began, to 2009 when the final round of treatment for LF was distributed.

MDP Director, Dr. Yao Sodahlon introduced the award explaining, "The LF Elimination Award was designed to highlight each country that achieves elimination. Countries will receive a plaque showing LF-endemic countries in Africa with each new country validated highlighted in gold. When the next country is validated, Togo will be shown in green and the new country in gold until the map is solid green indicating that LF has been eliminated in Africa."

GSK Director of Tropical Disease Programs, Dr. Mark Bradley, and Merck & Co., Inc.'s* Director of Corporate Responsibility, Ms. Rachel Taylor, also took the opportunity to congratulate Togo for their achievement. Both acknowledged Dr. Sodahlon for the pivotal role he played and leadership he demonstrated for LF elimination in Togo during his tenure as program manager when the program started.

Togo is a model program for LF elimination in Africa. MDP looks forward to celebrating with partners in Togo again when the country achieves the elimination of onchocerciasis.

Click [here](#) to read the joint MDP, MSD, and GSK 2017 press release on Togo's victory.

GAELF recognizes Togo for Eliminating Lymphatic Filariasis



GAELF Chair, Dr. Charles Mackenzie, presents award to Togo's Hon. Minister of Health, Moustafa Mijiyawa

Global Alliance to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (GAELF) Chair, Dr. Charles Mackenzie, also took the opportunity to present the government of Togo with an award. At the June 2018 GAELF 10 Meeting in India, the GAELF celebrated those countries that had recently achieved elimination of LF as a public health problem by awarding a plaque. As Togo was not represented in India, Dr. Yao Sodahlon accepted the plaque on behalf of Togo.

In Lomé, Dr. Mackenzie took the opportunity to acknowledge Togo in person by presenting a trophy, which was accepted by Hon. Minister Mijiyawa. Dr. Mackenzie noted “I am aware of the challenges and often very difficult work that needs to take place at all levels in a country, from the Ministry of Health to the health workers and drug distributors in the field. Your success is a great credit to your country.”

Highlights from the 62nd Mectizan Expert Committee Meeting



The opening session of the 62nd Mectizan Expert Committee (MEC) meeting in Togo included remarks from Hon. Minister of Health Professor Moustafa Mijiyawa and Dr. Fatoumata Binta T. Diallo, WHO Country Representative for Togo. On behalf of WHO, Dr. Diallo recognized Togo for its commitment to LF elimination. Hon. Minister Mijiyawa expressed his pride for Togo's long-term commitment to LF elimination and success. The 62nd MEC meeting is special because we are approaching two major milestones:

- The 20th anniversary of the Global Program to Eliminate LF and the establishment of new goals for the global elimination of LF
- 2020 marks the end of the 2012-2020 WHO NTD Roadmap and the launch of the new 2020-2030 Roadmap.

During MEC 62, participants discussed:

- The status of LF and onchocerciasis elimination
- New goals set for LF and onchocerciasis elimination in the 2021- 2030 NTD road map within the framework of universal health coverage
- Challenges and opportunities for reaching the goals

A broad range of stakeholders participated including: MEC and MEC liaison members, Merck & Co., Inc., GSK, Eisai, representatives from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Togo, WHO- headquarters and regions, funding partners, implementation partner NGOs, foundations, and research institutions.

A report, including conclusions and recommendations, is being drafted and will be shared in the coming weeks.

Merck & Co., Inc. awards \$500k to The Carter Center's Onchocerciasis Elimination Program for the Americas



Representatives from The Carter Center, Merck & Co., Inc., and the Mectizan Donation Program

In addition to the donation of Mectizan, Merck & Co., Inc. is also contributing funding to end onchocerciasis in the Americas. This \$500,000 gift will help finish the job of elimination in the single remaining endemic focus found on the border, which requires increased collaboration between the two countries. The populations in this endemic focus, the Yanomami, live in highly remote areas of the Amazon jungle without roads and are very difficult to reach. Despite the difficulties, onchocerciasis partners remain committed to work hard to seeing the end of onchocerciasis in Brazil and Venezuela -- the only two countries in the Americas where onchocerciasis has not yet been eliminated.



(*Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, New Jersey USA, is known as MSD outside the United States and Canada)

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