



African Malaria Research Initiative Moves to Cameroon

Location expands opportunities for central African and French-speaking scientists.

Nairobi, 6 November 2009 – Yaoundé, Cameroon will be the next site of the Multilateral Initiative on Malaria (MIM) secretariat. Wen Kilama, representing the current host of MIM in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, made the announcement at the conclusion of the world's largest scientific conference on malaria, here in Nairobi. The move to Cameroon is anticipated to occur in January of 2011.

MIM is a network to build capacity among African scientists to conduct malaria research. It was established in 1997 with the support of the United States National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Wellcome Trust in the United Kingdom, the Swedish International Development Corporation (SIDA), and TDR, the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases executed by the World Health Organization. The organizing secretariat was first set up at the Wellcome Trust in London, then Fogarty International Center at the NIH in the U.S., then the Karolinska Institute and Stockholm University in Sweden.

"We are very proud to have been the first secretariat in Africa," said Wen Kilama, Managing Trustee for the African Malaria Network Trust (AMANET) and host of the MIM secretariat since 2006. "And we are happy to pass on this tradition to another African institution."

The Cameroon site in central Africa, whose main languages are English and French, offers access to more Africans due to its bilingual status. This location at the Biotechnology Centre of the University of Yaoundé 1, working in coordination with the Academic Medical Centre in Amsterdam, was selected from a competition of three proposals. Professor Rose Leke will serve as Chair of the MIM Secretariat. Dr. Peter De Vries will be the Deputy Chair, and Dr. Wilfred Mbacham the Executive Director.

"MIM has brought a lot to African scientists," said Professor Leke. "We want to build on this in our bilingual country, consolidating MIM achievements as well as expanding into new areas. For example, we would like to help researchers communicate findings better, increase research that provides evidence for healthcare policy, and encourage more Africans to utilize the tools of genomics."

From a small meeting of 90 scientists—30 from Africa—in Dakar, Senegal in 1997, MIM has evolved into the largest malaria research meeting in the world, with more than 2000 scientists participating in this year's meeting in Nairobi. The vast majority of attendees were from Africa.

Together with organizations like Roll Back Malaria Partnership, MIM has helped raise awareness of the need for research on malaria to develop the new tools and strategies necessary for improved control.

MIM has provided research grants to investigators in more than 18 African countries, training, a repository of malaria samples for research, and internet and other communications connectivity to African researchers and institutions.

Under the AMANET leadership during the last five years, the MIM secretariat developed the Central African Network on Tuberculosis, AIDS and Malaria (CANTAM), which is cultivating clinical research capacities in the Republic of Congo, Gabon and Cameroon. Professor Francine Ntoumi, who has been the MIM secretariat coordinator for the last two years, will continue as coordinator of CANTAM.

About the Multilateral Initiative on Malaria (MIM)

The Multilateral Initiative on Malaria (MIM) was established in 1997 with the dual mission of maximizing the impact of scientific research through coordinated worldwide collaboration and of strengthening African research capacity to develop new tools for prevention and treatment.

MIM Pan-African Malaria Conference Website: <http://mimalaria.org/pamc>

Virtual Press Room: <http://mim.globalhealthstrategies.com>

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