MEDIA RELEASE

Tackling Efficiency for Malaria Elimination in the Asia Pacific

The twelve-country Asia Pacific Malaria Elimination Network (APMEN) is generating knowledge on what works to sustain the gains in malaria control and elimination during a time of malaria funding uncertainty. With the Republic of Korea as its host, the 2012 APMEN annual meeting takes place May 7 –11th 2012 in Seoul with the theme of “Efficiency in Elimination.” Focused on pressing malaria issues in the Asia Pacific region, APMEN countries and partners will discuss antimarial drug resistance, cross-border importation of malaria cases, and maximizing program efficiency by identifying malaria “hot spots” and focusing interventions in these areas. As the fourth of its kind, this APMEN meeting’s theme of “efficiency” reflects the urgent global need to maintain and expand malaria programs, in spite of substantial funding shortages related to the global financial crisis (e.g., postponed grants from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria)

With this meeting APMEN country representatives and partners aim to learn from country success stories – such as Cambodia’s impressive 35% reduction of malaria from 2010 to 2011 – and discuss strategic approaches for addressing the looming challenges of spreading artemisinin resistance and reducing the prevalence of Plasmodium vivax in the Asia Pacific. Although P. vivax is thought to account for fewer malaria deaths worldwide than P. falciparum (i.e., most prevalent strain of malaria in Sub-Saharan Africa), P. vivax is a main source of severe illness throughout the Asia Pacific region. Further, P. vivax currently has fewer effective treatment options than P. falciparum, which is a key research and investment issue identified by APMEN partners.

Since 2009, APMEN has brought together countries in the Asia Pacific that have adopted a national or subnational goal for elimination, as well as a broad range of key academic, development, non-governmental, and private sector partners. Through its regional network collaborations and annual gatherings, APMEN promotes the exchange of best practices, early introduction of innovative strategies, and support needed for country malaria control programs to push toward their goals for malaria elimination. In 2012, work from several APMEN countries, including documentation of Bhutan’s malaria elimination efforts and subnational surveillance programs in the Solomon Islands, has received international attention. With Cambodia’s recent welcome to APMEN as the network’s twelfth country partner, this year’s APMEN meeting in Seoul aims to further broaden the dialogue among country partners and harness the region’s collective expertise to improve malaria elimination efforts in the Asia Pacific region.

Further information regarding APMEN can be found at www.apmen.org.

About the Asia Pacific Malaria Elimination Network

The Asia Pacific Malaria Elimination Network (APMEN) was established in 2009 to support malaria-eliminating countries and catalyse the work on malaria elimination issues in the Asia Pacific, with a specific focus on Plasmodium vivax.

APMEN is composed of 12 Asia Pacific countries (Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, the Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vanuatu) that are pursuing malaria elimination, as well as leaders and experts from key multilateral and academic agencies. The mission of this diverse but cohesive network is to collaboratively address the unique challenges of malaria elimination in the Asia Pacific through leadership, advocacy, capacity building, knowledge exchange, and building the evidence base on elimination.

Development of APMEN took place in 2008 through the leadership of the UCSF Global Health Group (GHG) and the School of Population Health, University of Queensland (SPH/UQ). APMEN collaborates closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) and is supported by the Australian Government through its international aid agency (AusAID) with a commitment of nearly $7 million for ongoing support to the network. These investments complement Australia’s overall support for malaria control and elimination in the Asia Pacific and globally.

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