CONGRESSIONAL MALARIA & NTD CAUCUS BRIEFING

CONTROLLING DEADLY NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES: OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND THE U.S. IMPACT

Monday, February 22, 2010
2255 Rayburn House Office Building
2:00 p.m.

Please join the Congressional Malaria & NTD Caucus for a briefing on “Controlling Deadly Neglected Tropical Diseases: Opportunities to Expand the U.S. Impact” on February 22, 2010 at 2:00 p.m., in room 2255 of the Rayburn House Office Building.

Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), are a group of 14 parasitic, bacterial and viral infections, which continue to be a major public health and economic threat to the developing world. These are the most common infections in the 2.7 billion people living on less than $2 a day. Those affected are often marginalized and forgotten by governments, left to suffer in silence. Fortunately, control and treatment for these diseases are possible. The current U.S. government initiatives focus on a group of seven NTDs that have inexpensive, safe and effective treatments that are readily available.

However, the NTD Initiative currently excludes seven of the WHO recognized NTDs, including those that are often fatal if left untreated and have the highest death rates of all of the NTDs: leishmaniasis (kala azar), sleeping sickness (human African trypanosomiasis or HAT), and Chagas disease. These diseases, along with Buruli ulcer, are largely left out of control and treatment programs because they are considered too difficult and costly to treat; the available tools are limited; and disease burdens are misunderstood due to inadequate diagnostics and surveillance systems. It is critical that we treat these diseases and develop new treatments and diagnostics now in order to save lives in the future.

The U.S. plays an essential role in leading the international fight against NTDs and its current programs have demonstrated significant success. The U.S. government must also play a role in the development and introduction of appropriate new tools for NTD control. Eventually, even those diseases considered to be “tool-ready” today will require new tools in the future. It is necessary to broaden the scope of US programs to include increased investment in Research and Development (R&D) for new tools. Although the National Institutes of Health invests in early stage R&D for some NTDs, USAID has the capability to develop new tools through clinical research and field introduction as they already do for malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. With relatively little additional investment and within the next 5 years, the lives of patients suffering from these NTDs can be saved and several of the sorely needed tools necessary for long term disease control can be developed and introduced.

This distinguished panel of non-governmental organizations will discuss the needs and opportunities for the expansion of the US impact on NTDs:

- “Success of US NTD Control Program Targeting the 7 ‘Tool-Ready’ NTDs”: Mary Linehan, RTI, NTD Control Program Operations Director;
- “What about the other fatal NTDs? Life Saving Opportunities Today”: Dr. Francois Chappuis, International Advisor on NTDs, Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF);
- “Game Changing New Treatments in <5 years”: Dr. Manica Balasegaram, Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi), Sr. Clinical Research Manager