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## ***Malaria Vaccine Initiative Marks Africa Malaria Day with Call for Commensurate Attention to Leading Killer of African Children***

**(ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND, USA, 25 April 2003)** PATH's Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI) marked the observance of Africa Malaria Day by calling for greater international attention to malaria and the urgent need for a malaria vaccine. Malaria is a devastating infectious disease, killing over one million people per year, most of them children.

According to the *2003 Africa Malaria Report*, released today by the World Bank, World Health Organization, and UNICEF, over 90% of malaria deaths occur in Africa and the overwhelming majority are children under five years old.

Unlike many other infectious diseases now being controlled or even eliminated, there is no vaccine to prevent malaria. Families at risk of malaria struggle to protect themselves using current strategies such as insecticides and bed nets. The estimated 300 to 500 million cases of malaria that still occur annually require treatment with anti-malarial drugs.

Controlling the disease can be prohibitively expensive for African governments and for individuals who live off of less than \$1 a day. But hope exists in Africa and around the world that a malaria vaccine will someday be available to prevent malaria altogether.

"Malaria takes an enormous human toll, yet the malaria field is still largely neglected," said MVI Director Melinda Moree. "With sufficient financial support and greater international cooperation, a malaria vaccine can become a reality."

MVI is accelerating the development of a malaria vaccine and laying the groundwork to make sure that it will be available to Africa. With its partners, MVI seeks to bring more and better malaria vaccine candidates into clinical trials than ever before. MVI's efforts have led to the manufacture and initial clinical trials of five novel malaria vaccines, including four that had never been in vials.

"Building on what has already been learned, we are moving the field forward with increasing speed and insight. We know a malaria vaccine is possible, and we know that millions of African children are waiting for one," said MVI Scientific Director Filip Dubovsky

In the meantime, more and broader support is needed to support both better use of existing tools to control and treat the disease and work toward a vaccine.

That said, "just developing a vaccine is not enough, we must make sure it will be available to the kids who need it most," said Moree. "On Africa Malaria Day, our vision is of a child in Africa holding an immunization card that reads 'immunized against malaria.'"

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The Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI) is a global program established through an initial grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH). MVI's mission is to accelerate the development of promising malaria vaccines and ensure their availability and accessibility for the developing world. MVI's vision is a world where vaccines protect children from death and severe disease caused by malaria. For information, visit [www.MalariaVaccine.org](http://www.MalariaVaccine.org).

PATH is an international organization dedicated to developing, implementing, and evaluating innovative solutions to public health problems. PATH's mission is to improve health, especially the health of women and children. Visit PATH's Web site at [www.path.org](http://www.path.org).