

## The Malaria Vaccine Advocacy Fellowship: Bridging the gap between science and policymaking

### THE PATH MALARIA VACCINE INITIATIVE

(MVI) is a global program established at PATH through an initial grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. MVI's mission is to accelerate the development of malaria vaccines and ensure their availability and accessibility in the developing world. MVI's vision is a world free from malaria. For more information, please visit [www.malariavaccine.org](http://www.malariavaccine.org).

PATH is an international, nonprofit organization that creates sustainable, culturally relevant solutions that enable communities worldwide to break longstanding cycles of poor health. By collaborating with diverse public- and private-sector partners, PATH helps provide appropriate health technologies and vital strategies that change the way people think and act. PATH's work improves global health and well-being. For more information, please visit [www.path.org](http://www.path.org).

The Malaria Vaccine Advocacy Fellowship is an innovative leadership program of the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI) that provides malaria vaccine researchers and scientists in Africa with the tools and platforms to influence the policy debate around malaria vaccine introduction and use in their countries and beyond.

Launched in Accra, Ghana, in July 2008, this highly interactive annual program helps participants to:

- Communicate progress and challenges related to malaria vaccine development.
- Develop the skills to communicate their research beyond technical circles.
- Influence policy debates.
- Engage the media about the drive for an effective malaria vaccine.
- Encourage African policymakers to begin to gather the information they need to make early decisions on malaria vaccine use.
- Advocate for increased and sustained funding for malaria vaccine research and development.

The program consists of two parts: a workshop that includes media and advocacy training and six months of targeted, individualized coaching. As a result of this training and coaching, past participants have successfully reached out to media, communicated with policymakers on key aspects of their work, and written opinion editorials.

With a first-generation vaccine on the horizon, the fellowship program addresses the often substantial lag between the availability of lifesaving interventions and their actual use in developing countries. Throughout the industrialized world, many programs teach scientists and others to develop advocacy skills to bridge the gap between research and policy. The Malaria Vaccine Advocacy Fellowship provides that opportunity to clinicians in Africa who are excited about the prospect of the first malaria vaccine and are eager to see it introduced.

With support from the Exxon Mobil Foundation's Africa Health Initiative, the fellowship program—which was piloted in 2006 and 2007—has strengthened the skills of more than 30 scientist-advocates. The program, originally known as the Malaria Vaccine Science and Society Fellowship, has been developed in collaboration with the public relations firm Burness Communications.