



Press Release

Roll Back Malaria Zambezi Expedition arrives in Livingstone to international welcome on World Malaria Day

Livingstone, 25 April 2008 – Ministers of Health from Southern Africa, Princess Astrid of Belgium, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Roll Back Malaria partnership executives and expedition sponsors from as far away as Japan and USA welcomed the Zambezi expedition crew as they arrived in Livingstone, Zambia to commemorate the first ever World Malaria Day.

Half way through a 2,500 kilometer-long river journey through six countries, the expedition crew and national malaria control teams were commended for their courageous efforts to spotlight malaria and for intensifying the fight against the disease in the region.

"Access is one of the biggest challenges along the river. Flooding, cross-border population movement and lack of health facilities makes life difficult", says expedition leader Helge Bendl. "The determination of local malaria control staff and the communities to get malaria commodities to where they are needed has been truly amazing".

Launched three weeks ago in a remote corner of Angola, the four inflatable boats carrying expedition leaders, crew and filmmakers will continue on through Zimbabwe to the mouth of the Zambezi in Mozambique, arriving in mid-May.

Cross-border coordinated malaria control: a key success factor

Sponsored by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Roll Back Malaria partners, the RBM Zambezi Expedition has set out to rally political support for the fight against malaria and demonstrate the need for coordinated efforts. Navigating through Angola, Namibia, Botswana and Zambia the crew stopped along the shores of each country to take on board local malaria control staff, document the malaria situation in remote river communities and hand out insecticide treated nets and malaria medicines.

"As the Chair of the SADC Health Ministers, I can confirm that our commitment to the fight against malaria is steadfast and unwavering," said Hon Brigadier General Dr Brian Chituwo, Minister of Health, Zambia. "This year's slogan, 'Malaria - a disease without borders', reflects the essence of the bold Roll Back Malaria Zambezi Expedition which will demonstrate that only a cross-border initiative can force the disease into retreat in the region. "

The value of partnership: international advocacy

Malaria kills more than a million people worldwide each year—90 percent of them in Africa; 70 percent children under the age of five. Malaria, a preventable and treatable disease, causes loss of income and productivity on a scale large enough to slow a country's economic growth by as much as 1.3% per year.

Internationally agreed targets have been set for 80% use of malaria prevention and treatment by all populations at risk by 2010. With this three year count down in mind, World Malaria Day events in the USA, Germany, Switzerland, France and

the UK will stress the urgent need to rapidly scale-up malaria control. A bold call to action will be announced by the UN Secretary General in New York and linked to events in Livingstone, symbolizing the global impact of malaria and the need to urgently accelerate our efforts to control the disease.

The Zambezi Expedition will lay the groundwork for a regional malaria control initiative - the "Trans-Zambezi project" which will help to boost health, tourism and economic development in the Trans-Zambezi region and save millions of lives.

The Roll Back Malaria Zambezi Expedition is being sponsored by Coca Cola Africa Foundation, ExxonMobil, MACEPA, Medicines for Malaria Venture, Nets for Life, Novartis, Malaria No More, Sumitomo Chemical, UN Foundation, and Vestergaard-Frandsen.

The Roll Back Malaria Secretariat has facilitated support for the Zambezi Expedition organized by German journalist Helge Bendl and Swiss boating expert Andy Leemann.

More information and materials on Zambezi expedition at:

<http://www.rollbackmalaria.org/worldmaliaday/zambeziexpedition.html>



About the Roll Back Malaria Partnership

The RBM Partnership, launched by WHO, UNICEF, World Bank and UNDP in 1998 has since expanded exponentially and now includes — malaria-endemic countries, their bilateral and multilateral development partners, the private sector, nongovernmental and community-based organizations, foundations, and research and academic institutions — who bring a formidable assembly of expertise, infrastructure and funds to the fight against the disease.

A key role of the RBM Partnership is to lead continuing advocacy campaigns to raise awareness of malaria at the global, regional, national and community levels, thus keeping malaria high on the development agenda, mobilizing resources for malaria control and for research into new and more effective tools (including a vaccine), and ensuring that individuals at risk are key participants in rolling back malaria.

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