



Africa - Access to Medicines

I came that you may have life and have it to the full Jn 10:10

“He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” Lk 9:2

The example of Jesus healing the sick and sending his followers out to do the same has, in the Catholic Church, translated into a ministry of caring for the sick. A 2010 press release by the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care quantified the Church’s commitment to this ministry when it stated:

“The Catholic Church manages 26% of health care facilities in the world. The Church has 117,000 health care facilities, including hospitals, clinics, orphanages, as well as 18,000 pharmacies and 512 centres for the care of those with leprosy.”

In a message from Pope Benedict XVI to health-workers around the same time he said *“...an equitable and human health care is of particular interest for the Christian community in which care for the human being, for his transcendent dignity and for his inalienable rights is central.. Health is a precious good for the person and the community to be promoted, preserved and protected.”*

Promoting access to medicines is integral to preserving health, to protecting human dignity and the common good.



Medicines Should be a Right NOT a Luxury

Access to medicines is a human right stemming from the right to life itself. Yet denying this right is an injustice that is common in many parts of the world.

“Some of the reasons that people die from diseases like AIDS, TB, Sleeping Sickness and other tropical diseases is that life saving essential medicines are either too expensive, are not available because they are not seen as financially viable, or because there is virtually no new research and development for priority tropical diseases. It is for governments, International Government Institutions, the Pharmaceutical Industry and other NGOs to confront this injustice. What we as a civil society movement demand is change, not charity.” – Dr.

James Orbinski, MSF, 1999, acceptance speech for Nobel Peace Prize.

The lack of access to good quality medicines negatively affects the health and well-being of millions of people in Africa and across the developing world.

A Wish-List for Justice

In order to draw attention to those who suffer due to a lack of Medicines **Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)** has published a list of eleven wishes that, if granted, would go a long way to making medicines accessible to all.

Incredibly, only four of these wishes relate to science or the need to develop new drugs or diagnostic tools, while seven relate to man-made barriers caused by legal, procedural and cost (profit) issues.

The bottom line is that financial return to pharmaceutical companies is being placed before the health and even lives of people in developing countries. In the area of vaccines alone prohibitive costs means that one in five children are not fully vaccinated every year. That's more than 22 million young lives at risk in one year alone. It does not have to be like this, and justice demands that it should not be like this.

Most of the barriers preventing access to medicines could be removed if the political will to do so existed in developing countries and in the countries that produce pharmaceuticals.

The MSF wish-list is reproduced here with some additional explanatory information.

Treatment and Vaccine for Ebola



This virus has taken a devastating toll on the people of West Africa. MSF hopes to see at least one safe and effective Ebola treatment and test made available in 2015. This is likely to happen as fear of the disease spreading has spurred on the efforts of drug companies who, up to now, had little interest in developing Ebola medicines for use in poorer countries from which there was little prospect of financial return. The first batch of an experimental vaccine produced by Glaxo Smith Kline has already been shipped to Liberia.

Lower prices for vaccines



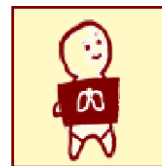
Vaccines against diseases like pneumonia can help save many children's lives - especially those who living in difficult conditions such as refugee camps. But these vaccines come with a HUGE price tag. It costs about \$40 to provide a child with all the necessary vaccines, far too much for most people or Governments to afford in Africa. In 2015, MSF is calling on drug companies to sell vaccines at the lowest global price so that more vulnerable children can be protected.

USA stop bullying India

India produces most of the drugs used in the developing world. The US, backed by big drug companies, is piling pressure on India in an attempt to block the production of cheaper generic medicines (which undercut high prices charged for US produced patent protected drugs). If the US succeeds then access to medicines in



Africa will be drastically reduced and have a disastrous effect on the health of Africans.



TB Tests and Treatment that work for Children.

Better tests and treatments are needed for children with TB. Right now, it's difficult to diagnose children accurately. TB treatment is also tricky as adult drug formulations are used, risking either under or over-dosing. MSF wants drug companies to develop an accurate and affordable TB test to diagnose children. They also want to see the roll-out of a new fixed dose combination pill that will make treatment much easier for children.

South Africa Fix Patent Laws.



Because patents are granted easily in South Africa people have to pay sky-high prices for many medicines.

MSF is asking South Africa's Government to fix the patent laws, so that quality-assured generic medicines are available to everyone. Lifesaving drugs are priced out of reach, while cheaper generics are prevented from entering the market due to patent barriers. This affects all types of drugs: treatments for drug-resistant tuberculosis, cancer, hepatitis, and newer antiretroviral medications for HIV.

Register New TB Drugs.

Two new drugs to fight TB exist, but patients still cannot get hold of them. So that these new drugs can be put into use immediately, MSF in 2015, is asking the drug companies to register them



with the authorities in as many countries as possible. An affordable price tag is needed on these drugs for all people who need them.

Help people with HIV to manage their treatment better.



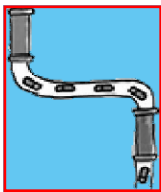
Knowing that their medicines are working is a huge support for people with HIV on antiretroviral medicines. Regular monitoring of virus levels confirms to both patient and caregiver that treatment is going well, or else sends an alert that change is needed. In 2015, MSF is asking for wider access to routine viral load monitoring. The goal is that 72% of people living with HIV should have an undetectable viral load. This would mean that drugs are being taken properly and that the HIV virus is being kept at bay.

Safe Passage for Generic Medicines through the EU.

The European Union is shaping a law that could mean generic medicines in transit through EU territory are seized - and even destroyed. The developing world depends on generic medicines, produced in India for medical treatments so this law could leave people without the life-saving medicines they need. MSF and other groups are



asking the EU to grant all generic medicines safe passage through Europe.



Fill the Empty TB Drugs Pipeline

The cupboard is bare! Despite two new drugs, the pipeline for new TB drugs is still painfully empty. New ideas are needed to incentivise the development of urgently needed drugs and regimens for TB. MSF suggests using prizes and the pooling of drug patents as means of achieving this outcome.

Cut down price of Hepatitis Drugs.



Breakthrough new drugs to treat Hepatitis C exist, but are priced out of reach of millions of people who need treatment in developing countries. MSF wants drug companies to bring down prices to affordable levels in ALL developing countries so that more people can receive treatment.

Save us from Snakebites.

Stocks are running dangerously low for one of the best antidotes for snake bites in Africa - yet the manufacturer, Sanofi-Pasteur, has halted production as it's not a lucrative market for them. Other antidotes



on the market don't deal with the range of venoms covered by the Sanofi product. In 2015, MSF is asking Sanofi to ensure this antidote is made available again.



Support the MSF Access Campaign. Its purpose is to push for access to, and the development of life-saving and life prolonging medicines, diagnostic tests and vaccines for patients in MSF programmes and beyond.

Go to - www.msfacecess.org



“Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church 2288

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