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Malawi Ministry of Health, bioMérieux, and Pfizer Form Country's First Multisectoral Collaboration to Help Address Antimicrobial Resistance

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- *Collaboration will leverage cross-sector resources and expertise to further the Malawi Ministry of Health's work to prevent antimicrobial resistance.*
- *The effort will focus on building infection prevention and control, diagnostics, surveillance, and treatment capacity in four public central hospitals.*
- *Antimicrobial resistance is an urgent public health priority for Malawi, resulting in an estimated 19,000 deaths per year.*[1]

LILONGWE, MALAWI, MARCY-L'ÉTOILE, FRANCE, AND NEW YORK, May 23, 2024 – The Malawi Ministry of Health, bioMérieux, and Pfizer today announced a collaboration to advance Malawi's first multisectoral initiative which aims to build public sector antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) capacity in infection prevention and control, diagnostics, surveillance, and to guide the appropriate use of antibiotics.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the biggest threats to global health and is estimated to be responsible for 1.27 million deaths per year.[2] In 2019, an estimated 60,000 people died from sepsis in Malawi, of which approximately 19,000 deaths were the result of bacterial AMR.[1] Given an estimated average drug resistance rate of 76%, this calls for targeted interventions including improved stewardship and infection prevention as well as regulations on antibiotic use.[3]

"Antimicrobial resistance is a global public health crisis that requires urgent action to help protect the health and wellbeing of the people of Malawi," said Dr. Collins Mitambo, Head of Antimicrobial Resistance Coordinating Centre-Republic of Malawi. "In alignment with the Malawi National Action Plan and building on our existing programs including our partnership with Fleming Fund and through new multisectoral initiatives like this, we can accelerate our national efforts and help turn the tide against antimicrobial resistance."

Currently in Malawi, most antibiotic prescribing is done without a diagnostic result due to limited sampling, lab capacity, inadequate human resources and manual testing methods.[4] Through the collaboration, bioMérieux will equip labs with a suite of new diagnostic and surveillance tools to help healthcare providers better improve patient care, while helping the Ministry of Health analyse pathogens and susceptibility to antibiotics. Key to this effort are digital solutions which focus on enhancing diagnostic capabilities and developing robust information technology infrastructure.

This will support the development of facility-specific antibiograms – starting at the four central hospitals, Kamuzu, Mzuzu, Queen Elizabeth, and Zomba – and contribute to Malawi's national AMR response.

“We’ve been working on AMR with the Malawi Ministry of Health since 2019 through the Fleming Fund Program. This new collaboration including Pfizer marks a significant and innovative collaboration demonstrating our dedication to combatting AMR,” said Michel Bonnier, bioMérieux’s Senior Director of Global Health. “Together we are committed to promoting the responsible use of antimicrobials by supporting healthcare providers. Our cutting-edge diagnostic and surveillance solutions not only improve testing and data sharing but also facilitate informed care decisions.”

Pfizer has provided a financial grant to University of North Carolina Project-Malawi to aid in technical assistance and training for the Ministry of Health and the four central hospitals. The aim is to help enable AMS committees in each hospital, strengthen the connection between physicians and labs, build microbiology and surveillance capacity, and improve pharmacy prescribing patterns. These activities intend to complement an existing digital education program available through TEACH AMS (Tele-mentoring, Equity & Advocacy Collaboration for Health through Antimicrobial Stewardship), a Pfizer collaboration with Project ECHO that utilises a tele-mentoring network to build AMS expertise and capacity amongst healthcare providers using case-based learning.

“The challenges around antimicrobial stewardship are complex and we need a multisectoral approach with industry, government, and NGO partners to drive real impact,” said Elif Aral, Pfizer’s Access & Accord Commercial Lead for Emerging Markets. “This collaboration is part of Pfizer’s commitment through An Accord for a Healthier World to help build health system capacity, expand access to quality care, and address the health equity gap for people most in need.”

Antibiotics are a cornerstone of modern medicine, yet only less than 2% of the 50,000 medical laboratories in 14 African countries, including Malawi, currently conduct bacteriology testing.[5]

Without definitive identification or susceptibility testing, antibiotics can be misused and overused for non-susceptible pathogens, further accelerating AMR.

About the Malawi Ministry of Health

The Malawi Ministry of Health, led by the Minister of Health, Honorable Khumbize Kandodo Chiponda, MP, and the Secretary for Health, Dr. Samson Mndolo, is focused on providing strategic leadership for the delivery of a comprehensive range of quality, accessible, and efficient health services to all Malawians through the creation and sustenance of a strong health system. The agency is driven by the goal to improve health status of all Malawians and increase client satisfaction and financial risk protection towards attainment of Universal Health Coverage.

The Ministry established the Antimicrobial Resistance National Coordinating Centre which is mandated to develop policies and guidelines pertaining to antimicrobial stewardship in Malawi. The centre has expert with different backgrounds such as human, animal, environmental and plant health.

About Pfizer and An Accord for a Healthier World

At Pfizer, we apply science and our global resources to bring therapies to people that extend and significantly improve their lives. We strive to set the standard for quality, safety and value in the discovery, development, and manufacture of health care products, including innovative medicines and vaccines. Every day, Pfizer colleagues work across developed and emerging markets to advance wellness, prevention, treatments, and cures that challenge the most feared diseases of our time. Consistent with our responsibility as one of the world's premier innovative biopharmaceutical companies, we collaborate with health care providers, governments, and local communities to support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care around the world. For 175 years, we

have worked to make a difference for all who rely on us. We routinely post information that may be important to investors on our website at www.pfizer.com. In addition, to learn more, please follow us on X at @Pfizer and @Pfizer News, LinkedIn, YouTube and like us on Facebook at Facebook.com/Pfizer.

Pfizer's An Accord for a Healthier World aims to close the health equity gap and help enable greater access to healthcare innovation for 1.2 billion people living in 45 lower-income countries around the world. The Accord is focused on strengthening health systems in lower-income countries which have historically been inequitably impacted by healthcare disparities. Through the Accord, Pfizer has committed to provide access to its full portfolio of medicines and vaccines for which it has global rights – both current and future products – on a not-for-profit basis in these countries. Learn more at Pfizer.com/Accord.

About bioMérieux

Pioneering Diagnostics

A world leader in the field of in vitro diagnostics since 1963, bioMérieux is present in 45 countries and serves more than 160 countries with the support of a large network of distributors. In 2023, revenues reached €3.7 billion, with over 90% of sales outside of France. bioMérieux provides diagnostic solutions (systems, reagents, software, and services) which determine the source of disease and contamination to improve patient health and ensure consumer safety. Its products are mainly used for diagnosing infectious diseases. They are also used for detecting microorganisms in food, pharmaceutical and cosmetic products. www.biomerieux.com.

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