



News digest 38  
Q4, 2013

Dear partners, friends, and colleagues:

The following is a summary of recent, current, and upcoming activities at the Meningitis Vaccine Project (MVP). We welcome your comments and suggestions at [info@meningvax.org](mailto:info@meningvax.org) and encourage you to forward this update to friends or colleagues who might be interested in learning about MVP's progress.

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### **Vaccine introduction and communication activities**

- Ethiopia, Nigeria, and The Gambia introduced MenAfriVac®, the group A meningococcal conjugate vaccine manufactured at Serum Institute of India Ltd. as planned during the last quarter of 2013. Preliminary campaign results based on administrative data indicate that the campaigns were overall very successful.
  - In Ethiopia, MenAfriVac reached more than 18.6 million people from 30 regions in the western part of the country. Campaign launch was delayed in some areas, but all the campaigns had ended by mid-December, with vaccine coverage rates ranging from 91% (Tigray) to 96% (Oromia). MenAfriVac rollout in Ethiopia will continue in 2014 and 2015 with additional campaigns targeting some 40 million Ethiopians aged 1–29 years.
  - Nigeria conducted the third phase of its MenAfriVac campaign in eight regions of the country between November 2–11. More than 21.2 million Nigerians received one dose of MenAfriVac, bringing the total number of Nigerian vaccinees to almost 50 million since vaccine launch in 2011. The administrative vaccine coverage averaged 99% among the 1–29-year-old target population. Nigeria will conduct its fourth and last MenAfriVac vaccination campaign in 2014.
  - The Gambia conducted its MenAfriVac campaign between November 28 and December 4. Administrative coverage data available on the last day of the campaign indicate that the country was able to vaccinate the whole of its target population—more than 1.2 million individuals—in just six days.
- In addition to the planned 2013 campaigns, mop-up vaccination activities were organized in some of the countries that have recently introduced MenAfriVac. The Chad Ministry of Health took advantage of ongoing polio campaigns to administer MenAfriVac to nomadic populations and people living in refugee camps, and health authorities in Cameroon vaccinated three health districts in the eastern part of the country in December. Counting an earlier vaccination campaign in northern Cameroon, around 400,000 individuals aged 1–29 years received one dose of MenAfriVac outside the “official” vaccination campaigns this year.
- Our Q3 2013 news digest reported that Sudan had vaccinated 6.3 million people in September 2013. Updated reports that include coverage rates from remote areas in the country indicate that 7.2 million young Sudanese received MenAfriVac.
- In all, the MenAfriVac campaigns reached more than 48.3 million individuals in 2013, bringing the total number of vaccinees in the African meningitis belt to more than 151 million since the vaccine was first introduced in Africa in 2010.
- No safety concerns have come to light among the vaccinated populations so far, including pregnant women.
- The four countries that introduced MenAfriVac in 2013 are currently conducting in-depth post-campaign evaluations. Assessed components include campaign preparation, coordination and planning; social mobilization and communication activities; training and supervision of health

workers; logistics; cold chain; waste management; surveillance of adverse events; vaccine coverage surveys, and use of financial resources. Lessons learned will be useful for the next round of vaccination campaigns and to inform decisions on each country needs to conduct mop-up campaigns or to strengthen capacity in terms of infrastructure for cold-chain and waste management or resources and training for social mobilization and pharmacovigilance activities.

### **Surveillance and epidemic preparedness activities**

- To date, there have been no reported cases of group A meningococcal meningitis among the 151 million individuals who received one dose of MenAfriVac in 2010–2013. Epidemiological surveillance is ongoing in all the countries that introduced MenAfriVac to further assess meningitis activity and vaccine effectiveness.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) Intercountry Support Team (IST) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, made a country visit to Ghana on November 10–20 to provide support for surveillance and data management activities. The team conducted a special workshop on the implementation of recommendations for case-based surveillance of meningitis at the laboratory in Tamale.
- The IST participated in a meeting at WHO in Geneva between December 16–20 to discuss the data and the evidence needed for the revision of meningitis outbreak response guidelines, including the epidemic threshold for alert and response and the use of antibiotic for presumptive treatment. The data include surveillance, outbreak investigation, campaign data and scientific literature. Following the collection, collation, and analysis of these data a guideline group coordinated by WHO will meet in April in Geneva to make recommendations for the revision of the guidelines.

### **Clinical activities**

- The following seven clinical trials related to licensing and prequalification of MenAfriVac for use in 1- to 29-year olds and/or infants have been successfully completed:
  - Phase 1 [PsA-TT-001](#) study in India.
  - Phase 2 [PsA-TT-002](#) study in Mali and the Gambia.
  - Phase 2/3 [PsA-TT-003](#) study in Mali, Senegal, and the Gambia.
  - Phase 2/3 [PsA-TT-003a](#) study in India.
  - Phase 2 [PsA-TT-004](#) study in Ghana.
  - Phase 3 [PsA-TT-005](#) study in India.
  - Phase 3 [PsA-TT-006](#) study in Mali.
- The closeout visit for [PsA-TT-007](#), the last MVP MenAfriVac clinical study, took place on December 11–12 at Center for Vaccine Development-Mali. A total of 1,500 subjects participated in this phase 3 trial that evaluated the immunogenicity and safety of different schedules and formulations of the meningococcal A conjugate vaccine administered concomitantly with local EPI vaccines in healthy infants and toddlers.

### **Preparing the after MVP**

- MVP held its annual project retreat in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on October 15–17, 2013. Senior PATH and WHO staff also attended the retreat to review the progress over the past year and plan the activities for the final year of the project. Discussion further focused on areas of work that need to be taken forward beyond the MVP lifespan.
- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded MVP a conference grant for an end-of-project meeting to be held in Africa in late 2014. The goal of the conference will be to celebrate MVP's achievements and ensure that public health goals are achieved beyond the life of the project.

That's all for now from the MVP team. Stay tuned for our next news digest in three months' time.

We look forward to receiving your comments at [info@meningvax.org](mailto:info@meningvax.org).

Created in 2001, the Meningitis Vaccine Project is a partnership between WHO and PATH. The mission of MVP is to eliminate epidemic meningitis as a public health problem in sub-Saharan Africa through the development, testing, introduction, and widespread use of conjugate meningococcal vaccines.

For more information on MVP, please visit our website at <http://www.meningvax.org>.