



## **Initiative Announced to End Malaria in Central America and the Dominican Republic**

***Inter-American Development Bank, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Carlos Slim Foundation to endorse five-year initiative***

**DAVOS, Switzerland** - The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Carlos Slim Foundation today announced an initiative to support seven Central American countries and the Dominican Republic in taking the final steps necessary to eliminate malaria in their territories. The Regional Malaria Elimination Initiative (RMEI) will bring \$83.6 million in new funds, and is expected to leverage over \$100 million in domestic financing and \$39 million of existing donor resources across the region by 2022 to ensure malaria remains a top health and development priority despite dwindling numbers of cases. The funding will serve to close the technical and financing gaps to support and execute country elimination plans in Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

“The IDB believes that eliminating malaria can only be achieved through sustained financing for locally-tailored approaches, and that’s why we’re announcing this initiative,” said IDB President Luis Alberto Moreno. “By combining IDB resources with local and international contributions to tackle a regional problem, this initiative also exemplifies the ‘blended finance’ model that will increasingly offer the best means of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.”

Under the initiative, the IDB will make available up to \$37.1 million to countries to participate in the effort. In addition, the Gates Foundation will provide \$31.5 million in a result based payment system. This “blended” financing mechanism allows the IDB to give countries access to concessional funding they may not otherwise be able to obtain for malaria programs. The Carlos Slim Foundation will add \$15 million to the initiative, which in addition to supporting the core objectives will allow RMEI to explore opportunities to expand into other geographies such as Mexico and Colombia. RMEI will complement the progress towards malaria elimination accomplished so far by the countries with support from Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and other partners. This initiative will also complement the malaria elimination efforts already underway in Haiti by the government and the Malaria Zero Alliance.

The concept of the RMEI was developed with the support of the End Malaria Council (EMC), a group of global public sector and business leaders dedicated to accelerating the end of malaria. The RMEI will build on the work done under the Salud Mesoamérica Initiative, a results-based financing partnership backed by the IDB, the Gates Foundation, the Carlos Slim Foundation and the Government of Spain to close the health coverage and quality gap in Mesoamerica.

“Salud Mesoamérica has proved to be a successful model to reach and impact disadvantaged populations with innovative, evidence-based interventions,” said Roberto Tapia-Conyer, CEO of the Carlos Slim Foundation. “With the RMEI we will be able to show, once again, the capacity of public-private partnerships to tackle complex public health problems in deprived settings.”

Although Central America has experienced a more than 90% reduction in malaria cases since 2000, progress has stagnated in many areas and several countries still report significant levels of transmission. The WHO reported 40,277 confirmed cases of malaria in 2016 in Central America, Dominican Republic and Haiti. An increase in financing would ensure malaria programs in these countries have the resources and support necessary to overcome the remaining challenges and accelerate toward elimination.

“This financing facility was made possible by the vision and leadership of a diverse group of partners,” said Bill Gates, co-chair of the Gates Foundation and the End Malaria Council. “This collaboration will build on each of the partners’ unique capabilities and expertise to cover financial and technical gaps in the region, demonstrating that we can eliminate malaria today using current tools. It will also help strengthen health systems in the region, positioning countries for success against other high-priority vector-borne diseases such as Zika, dengue and Chikungunya.”

The RMEI will build on work currently underway in the region to eliminate malaria, including PAHO’s recently approved plan for accelerating malaria elimination by 2020. With the support of Proyecto Mesoamerica and PAHO, countries in Central America and the Dominican Republic have also developed new national elimination action plans, and in June 2017, the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America signed a resolution to reiterate their commitment to malaria elimination.

In addition, the IDB is reaching out to governments and other potential donors to join the financing facility in anticipation of a launch in 2018. Participating countries will collaborate on improving early detection and diagnosis of malaria, as well as strengthening surveillance, particularly among indigenous, marginalized and mobile populations.

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### **About the Inter-American Development Bank**

The Inter-American Development Bank’s mission is to improve lives. Founded in 1959, the IDB is one of the main sources of long-term financing for the economic, social and institutional development of Latin America and the Caribbean. The IDB also conducts state-of-the-art research projects and provides policy advice, technical assistance and training to public and private clients throughout the region.

### **About the Carlos Slim Foundation**

Created in 1986, with high impact programs focused on the most vulnerable population, the Carlos Slim Foundation has benefited millions of people. With a high sense of social responsibility, efficiency and opportunity, the Foundation develops programs in the fields of education, employment, health, nutrition, justice, culture, human development, support in natural disasters, economic development, environmental protection and conservation. Among others, the Foundation also contributes to improving the quality of life of the population of all ages, promote the formation of human capital and generate opportunities that promote the integral development of people and their communities.

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