



BRIEFING

November 2009

Strengthening pharmaceutical innovation and access to medicines in Africa

AU/NEPAD and COHRED are cooperating to help African countries:

- **Build human and regulatory capacity and infrastructure for pharmaceuticals.**
- **Implement both the African Union Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan and the WHO Global Strategy and Plan of Action.**

Many African countries have the potential to engage in ‘pharmaceutical innovation’ - i.e. the process of local development and production of essential drugs and other medicinal products that can help them meet their dire public health needs.

To achieve this, countries need to apply knowledge to create additional value and national goods. This can be new knowledge and skills or using existing knowledge in new ways. To prepare, countries should do complete analyses of their current situation (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and collect accurate data. From this foundation countries can then design innovation strategies and action plans that are realistic, effective, and allow them to negotiate with potential donors and partners in the pharmaceutical industry. Innovation strategies may be national, regional or continental; pooling the best of skills and services from several countries into shared systems.

The Yaoundé Process¹ started in 2007 to support African countries to achieve pharmaceutical innovation and access to medicines. This process aims to provide a clearer picture of African medical research, and production and access to medicines. It should allow countries to define their needs and develop strategies for improving access to essential medical products.

Mapping of production and access to essential medicines in Africa

The Yaoundé Process study is the first attempt at a comprehensive mapping of African countries with emerging innovation systems; and covers drug discovery to development, delivery and access on the continent. It includes pharmaceutical companies, global health programmes, public-private and product development partnerships, local producers, NGOs and others.

Tools and guidelines for countries to design ‘innovation strategies’

The study reflects on countries’ needs for human, infrastructure and regulatory capacity development and on requirements for putting local drug manufacturing systems in place. It also analyzes the approaches of several countries and summarizes lessons learned. These findings are being developed into tools and a guide for policy makers and managers who are in charge of designing strategies for African local production of and improved access to medicines, and regional cooperation.

¹ Yaoundé Process partners include COHRED, the Government of Cameroon and The Netherlands. It was started to develop an African perspective on how to improve access to essential medical products, complementary to the Noordwijk Agenda, of the OECD and a number of Northern countries and pharmaceutical industry partners

The Yaoundé Process concludes in January 2010 with the launch of its findings for **Strengthening Pharmaceutical Innovation in Africa**. This also marks the starting point of a joint initiative by NEPAD and COHRED to help countries further assess their needs, develop action plans and start the first steps of implementation².

The findings of the Yaoundé Process will be thoroughly reviewed by a group of African experts at a technical meeting of the African Union in Pretoria during the last week of January, 2010. The experts will scrutinize the innovation framework from a technical and operational perspective, to prepare for its use by African countries to improve access to medicines.

Implementation of the Global Strategy and Plan of Action

This is one of the first practical steps for the implementation of the elements of the *Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property* that are most relevant for the *African Union Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan* and for the continent.

For further information, contact Kubata Bruno: b.kubata@africabiosciences.org
brunokubata@yahoo.com or Martine Berger: berger@cohred.org

² Detailed assessment and mapping of resources and needs for local production was done in 2007-8 by the Africa Union for the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa.