

News Release

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Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, and the END Fund Bolster Rwanda's Plan to Eliminate Schistosomiasis by 2024

- **Additional 8 million tablets of praziquantel per year for the treatment of adults**
- **Donation supports Rwanda's strategic plan to eliminate schistosomiasis and other Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) by 2024**

Darmstadt, Germany, January 29, 2021 – Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, and the END Fund today announced their partnership to provide Rwanda with 8 million additional tablets of praziquantel per year. The tablets are needed for treating adults endangered by schistosomiasis and will complement the annual donation of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, for the treatment of school-aged children. The new partnership is an integral part of Rwanda's NTD Strategic Plan to eliminate schistosomiasis and other NTDs as a public health problem by 2024.

"Back in 2007, more than a decade ago, our company committed to the fight against schistosomiasis. Today we are taking another important step to eliminate this deadly disease in Rwanda together with the END Fund," said Belén Garijo, Vice Chair of the Executive Board and Deputy CEO of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. "The additional quantities of praziquantel are urgently needed to support the communities at risk and will bring us one step closer to our goal of a schisto free world."



News Release

The donation of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, also represents a significant contribution to the Deworming Innovation Fund, a four-country initiative of the END Fund to progress towards the elimination of schistosomiasis and intestinal worms in Rwanda, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Zimbabwe. "The END Fund is thrilled to deepen its long-standing partnership with Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, with this generous donation. Through the Deworming Innovation Fund, it will allow our partners in Rwanda to reach more underserved communities with NTD treatments. This supports the government of Rwanda's efforts to end schistosomiasis as a public health problem, which in turn leads to better educational and economic outcomes," said Ellen Agler, CEO of the END Fund.

Annually, an estimated 4.3 million people in Rwanda require preventive treatment for schistosomiasis, of whom 1.6 million are school-aged children. Since 2011, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, has donated more than 15.2 million tablets for the treatment of school-aged children to this East African country. To move towards the elimination of schistosomiasis, it is necessary to treat the entire population at risk, including children and adults. Through this partnership, treatment for adults will be made available. The END Fund has been a key partner for the Rwandan national strategic plan for NTDs in the past and continues to do so through its Deworming Innovation Fund.

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, and the END Fund announced their partnership on the occasion of the second World NTD Day on January 30, 2021. The World NTD Day is supported by over 230 international partners to raise awareness for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and to call for action to put an end to these diseases.

Praziquantel donations from Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany have enabled the treatment of 520 million school-aged children

Schistosomiasis is a chronic condition and one of the most common and most devastating parasitic diseases in tropical countries. It is estimated that more than 240 million people are infected worldwide and that around 200,000 people die from it each year. The disease is transmitted by parasitic flatworms and the infection rate is particularly high among school-aged children.

News Release

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, has been fighting schistosomiasis with its partner WHO within the scope of its Schistosomiasis Elimination Program since 2007. Both parties committed themselves to continue their work in fighting the disease until its elimination. Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, has set itself the goal to achieve this in selected countries by 2030 through a comprehensive approach combining treatment, research and development, health education, and WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene). To date, the company has donated more than 1.3 billion tablets of praziquantel, enabling the treatment of 520 million school-aged children.

About schistosomiasis

Schistosomiasis is a chronic condition and one of the most common and most devastating parasitic diseases in tropical countries. It is estimated that more than 240 million people are infected worldwide and that around 200,000 die from it each year. Flatworms transmit the disease. It is widespread in tropical and subtropical regions where large sections of the populations have no access to clean water and sanitary installations. People become infected with the parasite via contact with freshwater, for example while working, swimming, fishing or washing their clothes. The minuscule larvae penetrate human skin, enter the blood vessels and attack internal organs. The infection rate is particularly high among school-aged children. Praziquantel is the only active ingredient with which all forms of schistosomiasis can be treated. WHO has therefore deemed praziquantel, the most cost-efficient solution for the health of patients in need, as the drug of choice.

About the Schistosomiasis Elimination Program of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, initiated its Schistosomiasis Elimination Program in cooperation with WHO back in 2007. Since then, more than 1.3 billion tablets have been donated, enabling the treatment of 520 million school-aged children. Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, has committed itself to maintaining its efforts in the fight against the tropical disease until schistosomiasis has been eliminated. To this end, each year Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is donating up to 250 million tablets to WHO. The planned annual donation has a value of US\$ 32.5 million. In addition, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is supporting awareness programs at schools in Africa in order to educate children about the causes of schistosomiasis and ways to prevent it. Furthermore, as part of a public-private partnership, the company is researching a new formulation of praziquantel that can also be administered to very young children. To date, the tablets are only suitable for children older than six. More information about the Schistosomiasis Elimination Program of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is available at www.emdgroup.com/en/sustainability/health-for-all/schistosomiasis.html

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About Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, operates across healthcare, life science and performance materials. Around 58,000 employees work to make a positive difference to millions of people's lives every day by creating more joyful and sustainable ways to live. From advancing gene editing technologies and discovering unique ways to treat the most challenging diseases to enabling the intelligence of devices – the company is everywhere. In 2019, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, generated sales of € 16.2 billion in 66 countries.

The company holds the global rights to the name and trademark "Merck" internationally. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the business sectors of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany operate as EMD Serono in healthcare, MilliporeSigma in life science, and EMD Performance Materials. Since its founding 1668, scientific exploration and responsible entrepreneurship have been key to the company's technological and scientific advances. To this day, the founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed company.

News Release

About the END Fund

The END Fund is the only private philanthropic initiative solely dedicated to ending the five most common neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), which affect more than 1.7 billion people globally. It efficiently puts private capital to work, advocating for NTD programs that are innovative, integrated, and cost-effective. It facilitates strong partnerships with the private sector and has supported national disease control programs in 30 countries. Since its founding in 2012, with its partners, the END Fund has provided over 740 million donated treatments worth over \$1 billion, over 12,900 surgeries for people suffering from the effects of the advanced stages of elephantiasis and trachoma, and trained more than 1.4 million people in NTD control and elimination efforts.