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**Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) Backgrounder**

**The Issue: Increasing Access to Affordable ARV in Sub-Saharan Africa**

**Introduction**

GRAN is launching a campaign to encourage pharmaceutical companies with a Canadian office to share their intellectual properties with the MPP so generic manufacturers and other product developers can manufacture affordable medicines for sub-Saharan Africa. This backgrounder provides GRAN members with information on this campaign, the planned actions and links to more detailed information.

**Background**

1. There continues to be a dire need for access to affordable medicines for more than 35 million people living with HIV/AIDS. Presently, only about a third can get the medicines they need. In the case of children, statistics indicate there are 3.4 million living with HIV and less than 25% have access to treatment.
2. Parliament’s failure to amend Canada’s Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR), provided motivation for GRAN to explore alternate means to increase access to affordable medicines and at Hello Friends 2013, GRAN agreed to consider other avenues to pursue this goal. This led us to the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP), a Geneva based international organization which aims to increase access to affordable HIV/AIDS medicines.
3. Further to an inquiry from GRAN Access to Medicines Working Group (AMWG) in May 2014, the MPP expressed an interest in building a framework of collaboration between the two organizations that would benefit our shared concerns of access to affordable medicines by those in need. In July 2014, Esteban Burrone (MPP Head of Policy) participated in a conference call with several AMWG members and Richard Elliott from the HIV/AIDS Legal Network. Based on that conversation the AMWG developed an advocacy plan in support of the work of the MPP, a plan subsequently approved by GRAN Steering Committee.

**What is the Medicines Patent Pool?**

1. The Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) is a United Nations-backed organization, endorsed by the World Health Organization, created in 2010 to increase access to affordable antiretroviral (ARV) medicines for people living with HIV/AIDS in developing countries. In May 2011, G8 countries passed a declaration supporting the work of the MPP.
2. The MPP increases access to ARV by negotiating with brand name pharmaceutical manufacturers to share their HIV medicines patents with the Pool, then granting licenses to their network of generic manufacturers who compete to produce affordable ARV. In return, brand pharmaceutical manufacturers generally receive royalties. To view how this works, click on <http://www.medicinespatentpool.org/wp-content/uploads/how-it-works-diagram-2014.jpg>
3. To date, the MPP has negotiated licenses for 10 priority HIV/AIDS medicines and one medicine for opportunistic infections. It has negotiated agreements with 10 generic manufacturers to produce these medicines.
4. In May 2014, the MPP launched its Pediatric HIV Treatment Initiative to spur innovation and improve the lives of children living with HIV. Since then, a number of brand pharmaceutical manufacturers have agreed to participate in the initiative, but not all of them are collaborating yet. Obtaining pediatric licenses from brand manufacturers might be a foot in the door to get more adult drug licenses in the future.

**Challenges – Areas for More Work**

1. While the MPP has been successful in obtaining the collaboration of many of the major ARV manufacturers, some have declined the invitation to collaborate or are sharing their patents with limiting “terms and conditions”. In Canada, AbbVie, Merck, Janssen, ViiV Healthcare, Bristol Myers Squibb and Gilead are manufacturers with ARV on MPP’s priority list and could be of interest to GRAN as a focus for advocacy.
2. The MPP has identified continued challenges with respect to the availability of combination pills, special formulations for children with HIV and more affordable versions of newer medicines where the first line drugs are no longer effective.
3. There are discussions about using the MPP model for other diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis C. The MPP is now undertaking feasibility studies to explore this idea further.

**Opportunities for GRAN Advocacy**

1. For the time being, due to the type of actions planned, all advocacy actions in support of the MPP initiative will be undertaken by members of the AMWG on behalf of the GRAN sisterhood, under the guidance of the MPP.
2. The AMWG will monitor the engagement of brand name manufacturers in MPP initiatives. When these negotiations result in new agreements that are of particular benefit to Sub-Saharan Africa, we will consider sending letters of congratulations. Where such agreements have limitations, we may want to encourage them to broaden the terms so more people (and countries) can benefit.
3. The AMWG will contact brand manufacturers with Canadian offices that have not yet engaged with MPP to encourage them to consider becoming involved in the MPP. This would signal that they are on GRAN’s radar, and that we will continue to monitor them on this issue.
4. The AMWG will also contact the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association to make known the work of the MPP and the possibility for Canadian generic drug companies to become licensed for MPP initiatives. We may then follow up with specific Canadian generic drug companies, as appropriate.

For more information about the Medicines Patent Pool, you can go to [medicinespatentpool.org](http://www.medicinespatentpool.org)

December 2014