WHO-BASED RESEARCH PROGRAMME WINS 2011 GATES AWARD FOR GLOBAL HEALTH

New social networking site provides platform to share stories of research progress

Washington, DC, 17 June: TDR – the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases that is based at WHO and co-sponsored by UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank and WHO – has been given the 2011 Gates Award for Global Health. At a ceremony in Washington, DC the evening of 16 June, the world's largest public health prize was presented to TDR Director Dr Robert Ridley.

"This award represents the culmination of 36 years of history," said Dr Ridley in accepting the award. "Researchers from all over the world have worked with us to find improved health solutions for people in poor countries. The long-term commitments from our donors have led to major progress against many infectious diseases of poverty."

Since 1975, TDR has:

- supported and advocated for research and development to address tropical and other infectious diseases associated with poverty;
- helped build the capacity and leadership of researchers where these infectious diseases

are widespread;

- provided research to help reduce leprosy to the brink of elimination;
- dramatically reduced the scourge of river blindness (onchocerciasis);
- improved dengue case management and diagnostics for diseases like TB and syphilis
- had a major impact on the control of malaria, Chagas' disease, visceral leishmaniasis and other tropical diseases.

This work has been done through a global network built through collaborations that connect scientists, including Nobel Prize winners, researchers, non-governmental organizations, pharmaceutical companies and other partners who have donated freely of their time and knowledge. TDR has supported the training and mentoring of thousands of researchers in developing countries, giving them the expertise to become local and world leaders in health research for the benefit of the poor and disadvantaged.

"This year's winner is an organization that has truly changed the landscape of global health," says Ambassador John E. Lange, Senior Program Officer for Developing Country Policy & Advocacy at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

TDR is reaching out to anyone who has been involved in the programme to share their stories and accomplishments since their original connection. A new social networking site has been set up at http://tdr-friends.ning.com/ , and anyone who has been involved with TDR is being invited to contribute to the site.

Tanzanian scientists were among those that nominated TDR for the award. "Our 35 year partnership has enabled a disease endemic country like ours to aspire to eventually find and develop solutions to our own problems, as well as share our technical knowledge with other disease endemic countries," says Dr Hassan Mshinda, Director General of the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology.

At an event to announce the winner during the annual World Health Assembly in May, WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan said, “developing countries greatly need research and development for innovative tools. They consistently give public health its greatest leaps forward."

TDR receives $1 million as part of the award, which will be used to expand its fellowship and training programmes. The award was established by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to recognize organizations that have made outstanding contributions to improving health, especially in resource-poor settings. This year's winner was chosen by a jury of international health leaders from more than 150 nominations received from around the world. TDR joins 10 winners from past years of the Gates Award, which is administered by the Global Health Council.