



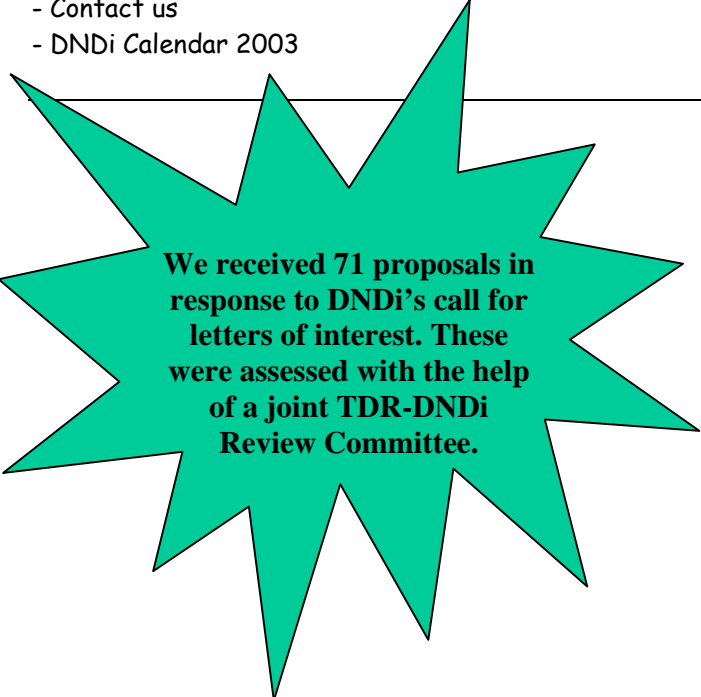
Newsletter No.4  
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**We received 71 proposals in response to DNDi's call for letters of interest. These were assessed with the help of a joint TDR-DNDi Review Committee.**

## Overview

The priority of the month was the Founding Partners Meeting on 13-14 March. The rest of month was a sinecure in comparison! Bernard Pecoul, Nicolas de Torrente, Dyann Wirth, Rachel Cohen and Yves Champey visited the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Nicolas and Yves visited the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in the US. We are preparing for the Nairobi meeting in early May, and the Bio 2003 convention in June. And on 11 April, responses to the call for letters of interest were reviewed.

## Synopsis of Founding Partners Meeting in Paris

The Founding Partners meeting in Paris on 13-14 March at Institut Pasteur was an unqualified success. The Institut was a welcoming and generous host, providing a venue not only for a public debate but also a press conference.

### Participants

Representatives of the Founding Partner Institutions, members of the portfolio teams, the DNDi interim team and legal consultants attended the meeting, which was chaired and moderated by Philippe Kourilsky, Director General of the Institut Pasteur.

### Objectives

The agenda emphasised the need for rapid action in the run up to the incorporation of DNDi as a legal entity in July. The actions decided at the July 2002 Geneva meeting were reviewed and assessed.

### Project Portfolio Update

Susan Thomas and Els Torreele presented progress achieved on the long-term portfolio (LT) and the short and medium term portfolio (SMT) building respectively.

For the long-term portfolio, literature survey and expert consultations have led to the identification of 15 targets for human African trypanosomiasis, 11 for Chagas disease, and 7 for leishmaniasis. Several other lead compounds have been identified with unknown targets.

The short and medium-term portfolio team has highlighted the importance of finding alternatives to AmBisome, an excellent Amphotericin B-based treatment for kala azar, but prohibitively expensive. Other priorities include the validation and registration in Africa of the new oral leishmaniasis drug Miltefosine, and the identification of appropriate combination treatments. For sleeping sickness, the only short-term options are nifurtimox and eflornithine, but exploratory work will look into other existing compounds that may be modified to cross the blood-brain barrier.

### Incorporation

The Bylaws were considered approved. A general Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between WHO/ TDR and DNDi would be ready by the July incorporation date.

### Board of Directors

Founding Partners presented the names of their nominees to the Board of Directors. KEMRI was proposed as the representative of the AfricaDNDi network to the Founding Partners group. And strategies to ensure

representation of neglected patients were discussed. It was decided to hold the first Board of Directors meeting on 4 July 2003, in Geneva.

### **Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)**

DNDi needs a strong SAC comprising a balanced representation of neglected diseases expertise, the major disciplines of drug R&D, public sector research and private industry, from the South and North. A first list will be selected from the names proposed by each founding partner institution, and the compilation of 44 external names.

### **Finances and Fundraising**

- The general principles of the funding strategy were approved.

### **Recruitment**

A recruitment committee was formed, comprising Yves Champey and delegates of MSF, Institut Pasteur, ICMR and the Malaysia MoH. The current President of MSF International will chair it. This committee shall approve job descriptions, focusing on the descriptions for the Executive Director and Director of Research who will be the first to be recruited. The posts will be advertised publicly.

- A shortlist of candidates for the **position of Executive Director** might be presented at the board meeting in July if a suitable number of candidates have applied.

### **Public Debate and Press Conference**

On 13 March, the first session of the Founding Partners meeting ended with a public debate moderated by Paul Benkimoun, journalist with *Le Monde*. The debate, held in Institut Pasteur's wood-panelled auditorium, was attended by almost 120 people from the Institut and MSF, as well as by other interested individuals.

The following morning, a press conference was held in the library of the Institut, attended by over 20 journalists. Yves presented DNDi briefly to the media and the press, radio and TV later interviewed Founding Partners individually. Copies of the press articles can be obtained from [patricia.martorell@geneva.msf.org](mailto:patricia.martorell@geneva.msf.org).

### **DNDi across the Atlantic**

**NIH:** Bernard, Nicolas, Dyann, Rachel and Yves had a successful meeting in Washington with Dr Fauci, Director of the NIH Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, NIAID, and his team. Bernard presented the Access campaign and some of its achievements. Yves presented DNDi. The discussion focused on the possible collaboration that NIH could build with MSF, and especially with DNDi.

**Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation:** On 21 March, Yves and Nicolas were in Seattle for a 2-hour meeting with Dr. Richard Klausner, Executive Director, Global Health Program, and his team.

Yves made a presentation on DNDi. Several aspects were discussed, especially the relationship DNDi will have with the pharmaceutical industry, and the way the \$200m provided by the Gates Foundation to the NIH Foundation for neglected diseases will be used. Input on this subject was sought from DNDi and the meeting ended on a positive note with the door left open for further contact.

## Healthy Response to Call for Project Ideas

DNDi received 71 responses to its call for letters of interest for drug discovery and drug development projects focusing on human African trypanosomiasis, Chagas disease, and leishmaniasis sent out on 13 February.

DNDi assessed these project ideas with the help of WHO/TDR's Chemotherapy Portfolio Review Committee. Yves Champey, Piero Olliaro, and Els Torreale attended the meeting as observers and Dyann Wirth, Jean-René Kiechel and Pierre-Etienne Bost as DNDi experts.

## Preparations for Nairobi

Preparations for the AfricaDNDi meeting in Nairobi, from 7-9 May, are going full steam ahead. Of the 50 scientists invited from all over Africa, 46 have confirmed their participation. The others are being followed up. An additional 11 international participants will attend.

The agenda has been set. The meeting will be in the form of a workshop where participants will brainstorm ideas for portfolio projects and discuss the contribution to DNDi of the African network as well as the private and public sectors in Africa.

A press conference is planned for 9 May.

## Communication Matters

**DNDi website.** Work on the website has begun. We hope to have it uploaded in time for the first Board of Directors meeting in July.

**10-pager.** The DNDi 10-paged document *An Innovative Solution* will be available as an illustrated publication by mid May.

**Logo protection.** Worldwide protection of the DNDi logo will not be undertaken at present. It will be reconsidered after a couple of years. The size and font of the logo will remain the same as the current one; the colour will be changed from red to terracotta.

**Video.** Shooting of the DNDi promo video is complete. Footage comprises:

- Interviews of the Founding Partners at the Paris meeting.
- Interviews of health workers, scientists, and kala-azar and sleeping sickness patients in Kenya and South Sudan.
- Kala-azar patients in Bihar and interviews with scientists at CDRI, Lucknow, India.
- Brazilian footage, courtesy Fiocruz, of leishmaniasis and Chagas patients and Far Manguinhos laboratories.

The footage will be compiled and edited into an 8- minute video in time for the launch in July 2003.

## Contact us

If you wish to contribute to the newsletter or would like to comment on any of the above topics, please write to [jaya.banerji@geneva.msf.org](mailto:jaya.banerji@geneva.msf.org)

Your suggestions are welcome.