

Governance of R & D for neglected diseases – Keynote speech

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MMV is a Product Development Partnership (PDP) a subset of the larger Public-Private-Partnership model. These partnerships were developed conceptually in the late 1990s as a paradigm to accelerate the research and development of products for resource poor settings. When the United Nations created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, signatories proclaimed that all people have the right to education, work, health and well-being. But today 'The Bottom Billion' are too crippled by poverty to fulfill these basic rights. These are the conditions where market failure typically produces neglected diseases. In actual fact, these are diseases of neglected populations.

The objective of the PDP model has been construed as a way to mitigate such market failure through simple push funding to incentivise the private sector to participate - but in reality the model only operates well when a great deal of sophistication is applied to all its operations, not least to the way it is governed.

MMV's original business plan considered governance issues in some detail. While much of the analysis was done from the perspective of an organization with historical roots within the UN system (it was originally incubated in TDR, WHO's 'Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases') it nevertheless sought to be much lighter and operationally more responsive to the challenge of doing R&D for neglected diseases than possible within WHO. Indeed it sought to be not bureaucratic but entrepreneurial in its culture. We were building a real public & private venture, taking the best from both sectors - the efficiency of industry and the altruistic values of the public sector.

To some this may seem to be an impossible feat - a history of incubation in and continued strong affiliation with WHO and other UN bodies, yet a desire to be entrepreneurial and flexible. This naturally led to several questions and subsequent operational and governance innovations that will be discuss here, *inter alia*:

- Who are the stakeholders of a PDP like MMV- and what do the differing kinds of stakeholder want?
- What are the governance challenges of going from UN incubated start-up to a mid-size independent non-for-profit organisation?
- Which stakeholders should be represented on the Board of Directors? Should financial donors be treated differently from others?
- Other than statutory functions what role should the Board of Directors play in the strategic or operational management of a PDP?
- Are the available non-profit legal structures (like Swiss Foundations) really suitable for PDPs?