

# The Meningitis Vaccine Project

## Companion Notes

2014

Gordon R, Røttingen JA, Hoffman S. The Meningitis Vaccine Project. Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University 2014.

### Overview

“The Meningitis Vaccine Project” follows the vaccine development for Meningitis A, a life threatening disease that routinely caused deadly epidemics in Sub-Saharan Africa. In particular, the case explores why such a vaccine had not been developed previously and how the creation of the Meningitis Vaccine Project (MVP)—a partnership between the World Health Organization (WHO) and PATH, a non-governmental organization—enabled the vaccine to be successfully developed over 10 years by creating a novel product development partnership.

### Learner Level

This case would also be of interest to those teaching courses in global governance, global health, and leadership. It could be used at the high-school, college, graduate or professional level.

### Context

Students examine why the public/private partnership was successful for the creation of a Meningitis A vaccine. Students also consider what made it so difficult and how such a model could be applied to the development of other vaccines and health technologies. Additionally, the case explores the strategies applied by Marc LaForce, the MVP’s director and veteran public health advocate, to make the MVP a success. In particular, the case examines the management skills LaForce exercised during his tenure to develop a vaccine that affected African countries could afford through their own health budgets, thus making the prevention of Meningitis A sustainable through national country funding (instead of relying on international donors’ agendas and support).

### Background

The case was initially written specifically for “GHP 554: Innovation, Access to Medicines and Global Governance,” a course at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, taught by visiting Professors John-Arne Røttingen and Steven Hoffman in the spring of 2014. A key focus of this case is the role that global governance played in both facilitating and, at times, preventing the development of the new vaccine for Meningitis A, MenAfriVac. Students consider the role that international actors (such as WHO, national governments, and agencies) and other groups (including those from the private sector) played in this story. The case highlights the global policy issues affecting innovation and access to health technologies in developing countries. Specifically, the case presents issues related to strategic decision-making on the development of new vaccines—in this instance the vaccine for Meningitis A—where there is limited ability to pay and where additional incentive mechanisms are necessary to catalyze innovation.

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