

BHF Newsletter

E-News for Friends of the BHF: April 2004

Honorary Co-Chairmen

George F. Russell, Jr.

The Honorable John C. Whitehead

The Business Humanitarian Forum brings the resources, energy and creativity of the private sector to bear on the world's most pressing humanitarian problems, promoting economic development, human security and well-being.

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BHF to Mark its Fifth Year of Operation May 14

The BHF will celebrate its first five years of expansion and success on May 14 in Geneva with the presentation of the first annual Business Humanitarian Award. The Award recognizes an outstanding contribution by a business leader towards the BHF mandate, "to bring the private sector's resources, creativity and energy to bear on the world's most pressing humanitarian issues."

BHF Signs Agreement with Swiss Red Cross for Cooperation against AIDS in Africa

On March 31 the BHF and the Swiss Red Cross signed an agreement in Bern establishing a joint program for cooperation in the development of HIV/AIDS clinics in Swaziland. The clinics will offer comprehensive programs for AIDS treatment, including the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus, and treatment for infected mothers so that they can take care of their children. The BHF will seek the

support of the private sector for this project, including donations in kind and financial support. See also the text of the press release on this subject, annexed to this Newsletter.

Mission to Afghanistan

A two person BHF mission was in Afghanistan March 6-18 to advance the BHF's projects in that country. Progress was made in a number of areas, especially the BHF projects on generic medicines, grain milling, and telecommunications. Another such mission is planned for May.

BHF Project Identified by Afghan Government as First Model for Privatization Law

The Afghan government has identified the BHF's project proposal to rehabilitate Afghan flourmills as the first model to initiate the privatization process of State Owned Enterprises, and to build the country's privatization laws. For this process to be completed successfully, the BHF is working closely with the Afghan Ministry of Light Industries, Ministry of Finance and USAID's privatization expert. Once the facilities are privatized, the BHF will work with a private sector partner to rehabilitate the mills. The World Food Program and UNICEF have both expressed support for this project. Currently much of the flour consumed in Afghanistan is imported. Local milling will permit the addition of vital micronutrients to the flour.

Afghan Ministry of Health Encourages the BHF to Build Two Additional Medicines Factories

The Afghan Ministry of Public Health (MOH) strongly supports the BHF's project to build a generic medicines factory in Afghanistan to produce essential medicines, and has suggested that two additional factories be built in border towns Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif so that their quality-control laboratories can also be used to test imported medicines from neighboring countries. The MOH currently has neither productive capacity nor adequate testing facilities. The BHF-built facilities will be the first productive plants in the country and will be owned by Afghan entrepreneurs recommended by the MOH. USAID's national health program, REACH, has indicated that they would consider buying quality medicines locally, once the Afghan plants are set up, rather than importing them.

DHL to Transport Equipment for BHF's Afghan Generic Medicines Project

DHL, the international express and logistics company, has agreed in principle to transport the equipment being donated for a generic medicines plant in Kabul. The plant, a BHF private sector development project, will produce generic medicines for the local market. The equipment for the plant, as well as raw materials, technical training and management advice, will be provided by the European Generic medicines Association (EGA), based in Brussels. "We are very pleased with this generous undertaking by DHL", said BHF President Maresca. "It shows once again what the private sector can do to alleviate

human suffering around the world, through cooperation and intelligent use of its resources."

Bosnia and Herzegovina Contact Group

A first BHF Contact Group meeting on development of private investment in Bosnia and Herzegovina was held on February 6 in Geneva . A delegation from the UNDP Country Office in Sarajevo participated, along with a representative of the UNDP Office in Srebrenica. With the encouragement of UNDP the BHF is planning for a first mission to Bosnia in April to identify potential private investment opportunities and specific public-private ventures for BHF action.

OSCE Meeting in Dublin plus consultations in Vienna with OSCE and UNIDO

BHF Managing Director Eleonore Kopera made a presentation at an OSCE conference in Dublin on 17 February 2004 on the BHF's model for post-conflict private sector reconstruction. Subsequently, BHF President John Maresca traveled to Vienna on March 19 for consultations with the OSCE Secretariat on possibilities for BHF-OSCE collaboration on matters of joint concern, especially in Central Asia and the Balkans. A number of interesting possibilities emerged, and the BHF staff will be considering these over the coming weeks. While in Vienna Maresca also held consultations with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) on possible areas for cooperation between the two organizations.

Presentation to Geneva Business Roundtable

By special invitation the BHF made a presentation on March 17 to one of the regular meetings of the Geneva Business Roundtable. The presentation covered the BHF's overall approach to public-private cooperation and its projects in Afghanistan, Africa and the Balkans. It also introduced the projected training program the BHF is developing to promote more effective cooperation between UN organizations and the private sector, and to develop the skills needed for such cooperation.

Presentation at World Trade Center (WTC) in Brescia

The BHF made a presentation on its work on March 26 to senior business executives and representatives of charitable foundations in Brescia, Italy. The event was sponsored by the World Trade Center for East Lombardy, in Brescia, which also serves as the central coordination point for World Trade Centers throughout Italy. The WTC's National Coordinator for Italy, Vittorio Coco, saw the event as the first of a series of such presentations at WTCs in major Italian cities. Many Italian companies are interested in opportunities to participate in BHF projects in Afghanistan, Africa and the Balkans.

New Partnership to Fight HIV/AIDS in Africa PRESS RELEASE

Bern - March 31, 2004

The Swiss Red Cross (SRC) and the Business Humanitarian Forum (BHF) today signed a Letter of Agreement to form a partnership dedicated to fighting HIV/AIDS in Africa. Specifically, the two organizations will work together on a project to expand the Mahwalala Clinic in Swaziland to accommodate and sustain an integrated HIV/AIDS program. This program may possibly be extended to other Red Cross clinics in Swaziland.

Swaziland, with one of the highest infection rates for HIV/AIDS in Africa, is urgently in need of assistance with such a program. The SRC has been working in Swaziland for many years in cooperation with the Baphalali Swaziland Red Cross Society, and decided to take this step to increase the ability of Swaziland to battle one of the most pernicious effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the infection of unborn children with the disease through their mothers.

The comprehensive Swaziland HIV/AIDS program consists of four main components: a home-based care program; a youth program (HIV prevention and orphan support); a voluntary counseling and testing program (VCT); and an anti-retroviral therapy program for the prevention of mother to child transmission (MTCT). The SRC manages the comprehensive program with the Baphalali Swaziland Red Cross Society.

The BHF will assist in obtaining support for expanding the integrated HIV/AIDS program - currently budgeted at initial capital costs of 425,000 Swiss Francs to improve the Mahwalala Clinic as well as recurrent annual program operating costs of 1,104,000 Swiss Francs over a period of five years - by bringing the resources and expertise of the private sector to bear on the project through working partnerships with private companies as well as public institutions such as foundations and governments. These partnerships will seek to provide the necessary medicines, technical support, training, and basic infrastructure support for the Mahwalala Clinic such as laboratory equipment and building expansion.

At the signing ceremony, the Director of the SRC, Daniel Biedermann, noted that the agreement is an important step for the SRC, in that it provides for the possibility of major private sector assistance to a concrete project to expand an urgently needed HIV/AIDS program.

The President of the BHF, John Maresca, indicated that the BHF would work closely with private businesses, especially in the pharmaceutical sector, to find the necessary assistance for the program. He also expressed his hopes that the program could rapidly be replicated elsewhere in Swaziland and in Africa.

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Further information - BHF: www.bhforum.org SRC: www.redcross.ch

Contact BHF

BHF personnel are available for speaking assignments on subjects related to the work of the BHF, on a mutually-convenient basis.

For further information on the BHF, please visit our website, at <http://www.bhforum.org/>

For inquiries and comments please contact the BHF at bhinfo@bhforum.org or by mail at:

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The Business Humanitarian Forum is a non-profit association registered under the laws of Switzerland. We welcome your support, which will help us to continue our work.

The Business Humanitarian Forum was established in 1999. Founders: Peter Bell, Jean Freymond, John Imle, John Maresca, Sadako Ogata, Vladimir Petrovsky, Jane and George Russell, Cornelio Sommaruga, John Whitehead and Robert Zoellick.