

WHO Welcomes the Noguchi Award's Recognition for Service to Global Public Health

Medicine

Posted by: niccosan

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Geneva-27 March 2008-Too often the sacrifices of people working in global public health go unrecognized, but not in this case. The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomes the announcement that the Government of Japan is awarding the first Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize for service to global public health.

The two recipients of the prize are Brian Greenwood, Professor of Clinical Tropical Medicine at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and distinguished innovator in malaria research; and Miriam K. Were, an AIDS specialist performing ground-breaking community-based work in East Africa.

"Awards such as these honour excellence and dedication," said Dr Margaret Chan, WHO's Director-General. "But they also draw attention to the importance of improving health in Africa and this is a top priority for WHO. I am delighted to congratulate the Government of Japan for this award which will hopefully ignite the imaginations and give courage to others to join in this vital work."

Dr Were has been recognized for working all her life to deliver basic health services to the people of Africa at the local level including her contribution to the AIDS fight. As chairperson of Kenya's National AIDS Control Council, Dr Were has provided critical leadership which has contributed to both a reduction in HIV prevalence and AIDS-related mortality.

Dr Greenwood has worked for 30 years in Africa on one of the continent's deadliest diseases -- malaria. Malaria is a tragedy in Africa, killing one child under five every 30 seconds. The Government of Japan noted in its award that Dr Greenwood has done pioneering research on the immunology, pathogenesis and epidemiology of the disease. His work has provided the foundation for much of the national and international public health policies established to confront the disease.

"We have always been grateful for this work, and now we are pleased that these people have been recognized," said Dr. Luis G. Sambo, the Director of WHO's Regional Office in Africa. "There are thousands of other individuals working all across Africa every day. They are demonstrating every day that the hard work of individuals does make a significant contribution to improving health. With improved health comes stronger communities and stronger economies."