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Gates Foundation Gives \$750 Million to Vaccines Alliance; \$43 Million Goes to Malaria Drug Project

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I'm Gwen Outen with the VOA Special English Development Report.

The world's richest man is giving away more of his money to fight diseases in the world's poorest countries. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently announced a gift of seven hundred fifty million dollars. The money will go, over ten years, to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization through its Vaccine Fund.

The gift will support national programs in seventy-two countries to protect children against several diseases.

The Gates Foundation also gave seven hundred fifty million dollars to the Vaccine Fund in nineteen ninety-nine. These are the largest grants the foundation has made yet.

Bill Gates is chairman of Microsoft, which makes the operating system on most personal computers.

Another Gates Foundation gift announced last month will go to malaria research. Nearly forty-three million dollars will help support what is described as the first non-profit drug company in the United States.

The company, OneWorld Health, will work with Professor Jay Keasling at the University of California, Berkeley. He hopes to create a so-called bacteria factory at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory to grow artemisinin. This is the medicine that the World Health Organization considers the most promising new drug to fight malaria.

It is now made from a plant that grows in Asia. But the drug is in short supply. The goal is to grow artemisinin another way, in a laboratory, to provide a low-cost new cure for malaria.

The gift happened to be announced a week before the death of the man considered the father of modern malaria research. William Trager, an American, was ninety-four years old.

William Trager found a way to grow the most deadly form of malaria in a laboratory. Yet, almost thirty years later, scientists are still working on a vaccine to prevent the disease. The W.H.O. says mosquitoes spread malaria to about three million people per year. More than one million of them die. Most who die are young children in Africa.

In Senegal, a two-day music event by African artists is being organized to support the Roll Back Malaria Partnership. That is an international effort to cut the number of malaria cases in the world in half by two thousand ten. The concert is planned for March twelfth and thirteenth in Dakar.

This VOA Special English Development Report was written by Jill Moss. I'm Gwen Outen.