

OUR ACTIVITIES | THE TRAFFIC IN FALSIFIED MEDICINES

Access to proper healthcare is a fundamental right but for too many people in Africa and beyond their health is being put at risk by the proliferation of falsified medicines. Concerned that this issue is not being given the priority it deserves by the international community, the Brazzaville Foundation is launching a campaign to raise awareness of the scale and the dangers of the traffic in falsified medicines

The worrying growth of an industry which kills

A million people worldwide die each year directly or indirectly as a result of falsified medicines and fraudulent labelling. Far too many people, notably the poorest and most vulnerable, are being fooled into thinking that their illnesses are being treated when in reality these false drugs are at best ineffective and often dangerous and even fatal.

The WHO has stated that of the one million deaths caused by malaria each year, 200,000 could have been saved if they had been treated with genuine rather than fraudulent medicines. In 2013, the International Institute of Research Against Counterfeit medicines announced that more than 120,000 African children had lost their lives because of fake anti-malarial and other drugs.

It is estimated that 30-70 percent of the medicines circulating in African countries are falsified, adulterated, or without any medicinal value. The huge profitability of the trade in counterfeit medicines, currently reckoned to be worth between 45-75 billion dollars per year, is attracting growing numbers of criminal organisations.

A number of African countries have already started to tackle the problem. But the sheer scale of the transnational traffic in falsified medicines and, in particular the huge expansion of internet sales and the growing involvement of organised crime, threaten to overwhelm these individual initiatives with serious consequences for the health of their populations and the economic development of their countries.

The need for international action

To resolve this crisis, we need a sustained, global strategy which mobilises and coordinates national, regional and international efforts. The Brazzaville Foundation's aim is to help African countries to launch a political and media campaign to ensure that the international community treats the proliferation of falsified medicines as the major public health crisis it is and starts to give it the priority it requires.

In particular, we will be urging:



- much more effective international cooperation to ensure a credible law enforcement system, including tough, new penalties for manufacturing and trading falsified medicines;
- much greater resources to be given to pursuing and bringing to justice the criminals responsible for this trade, including increased efforts to dismantle supply chains;
- international support for major national and international information campaigns to alert the public to the grave dangers posed by falsified medicines.

