

Congratulations on the Nobel prize

To all friends of anamed

- 1. Congratulations on the Nobel prize:** our “Campaign for Natural Medicine in the Tropics”, abbreviated to “anamed”, has contributed to thousands of people in the Tropics **avoiding falling ill with Malaria or being cured from it. Our African colleague in this branch of research was awarded the WHO “Prize of Excellency” and at the suggestion of the Regional Administrative Authority, our German colleague even received the German [Federal Cross of Merit](#) for this global work. Until today, scientists the world over either confirmed or fought against our work. All this work has now reached a new level because Artemisia annua didn’t just sprout from an idea planted by us: we have Ms Tu Youyou to thank for its rediscovery and she won the Nobel Prize for Medicine today, congratulations to her....and to all the anamed collaborators in malaria-afflicted countries for your important and so often mocked work!!!**
- 2. The story so far: China and the WHO**
At the height of the Vietnam war, the conflicting parties realised **that Malaria was killing many more soldiers than their enemy’s bullets. In desperation, Ho Chi Minh and Mao Zedong turned to their (actually despised) professors, asking them to immediately find “a fast-acting medicine for Malaria without resistance or side effects”. In 1968, Prof. Youyou discovered the plant Artemisia annua and by chewing its leaves the soldiers protected themselves from Malaria and the Vietnam war ended in favour of Asia. In the new 1985 edition of China’s Pharmakopoeia, a dose of 5-9 grams of Artemisia annua as tea was recommended for fever and Malaria. The WHO however – understandably – was not open to this therapy. In the meantime, China became capitalist and since tea doesn’t lead to riches, in 1972 one (!) of the 10 malaria-effective elements of the tea was isolated (artemisinin) and patented as a remedy for Malaria. It took 32 years for the WHO to urgently recommend the artemisinin therapy as a Malaria treatment, in 2004; but in 2006 resistance to this monotherapy was discovered and the WHO withdrew its recommendation and has since only recommended the combination of artemisinin plus antibiotics. The fact that the WHO began by only issuing a global recommendation for the product from the Swiss company Novartis for Coartem, led to international protests and demonstrations, from Médecins Sans Frontières, for example. The onset of resistance even to this combination as “Mankind’s last weapon” is giving rise to worldwide concern.**
- 3. The story so far: anamed and Baden-Württemberg**
The campaign group “anamed” was founded by my African employees and myself on 25th January 1986 in the Zairean village of Matamba-Solo, and was made known globally on my return to Germany as a development aid worker in

1991. The keen interest in “helping people to help themselves”, particularly in the pharmaceutical sector, enabled us to cooperate with a number of aid organisations and universities. It wasn’t until 1996 in Uganda that we became familiar with the new Malaria medicine, “Artesunate” (water-soluble artemisinin). **My immediate aim was to get access to this plant so as to propagate a freely available tea, as opposed to tablets (only available for the upper classes; at the time the treatment cost 20 Dollars while a worker earned 1 USD a day). I requested scientific support from the WHO: however, the response was that the use of medicinal plants against fatal tropical diseases, of which the medicinal value strongly varies from plant to plant, would be irresponsible. This unfortunately proved to be true; the wild form of Artemisia annua has massively varying compositions. I was therefore very grateful to gain access to a special culture of Artemisia annua (not genetically manipulated) from which plants with a consistently high artemisinin content could be cultivated. We then began distributing these seeds the world over and requested all our contact groups to inform us of their results. The plant proved to be effective as a Malaria-prophylaxis and therapy, a milestone in the history of the Tropics which seemed incredible to some traditional health professionals. To bring the discussion to a more objective level, the University of Tübingen held a press conference on 22nd July 1999. Present were 2 TV channels, 3 radio stations and 11 media representatives. Due to the controversial discussion about A-3, the then Health Minister for Baden-Württemberg, Dr. Friedhelm Replik, invited myself and 2 other named colleagues to speak at a conference on the topic: “Medicinal Plants – an Opportunity for Healthcare in Developing Countries”. It took place on 11th February 2000 at the German Institute for Medical Mission (DIFÄM) in Tübingen and was attended by over 100 people, the majority of whom were from the field of medicine.**

4. **Reasons for our work:** Let’s consider:

A reduction in the Malaria incidence rate of only 20% in Africa translates to an economic gain which corresponds to the total amount of development aid granted to Africa (20 billion USD per year)! Or: if we can prove that Artemisia tea cures 80%, then this almost free of charge medication would save 4 times the amount of global development aid for Africa! The TV station, ARTE, says “Malaria, a victory in sight” and the Süddeutsche Zeitung calls it “the plant that could save Africa”. We say simply: yes, a victory is in sight – not in the sense that an enemy will be destroyed but in the sense that a condition becomes controllable: mankind will not eradicate Malaria and Malaria should no longer threaten to eradicate mankind! Our vision is to keep Malaria treatable and to keep the treatment accessible to the poorest for millennia to come!

We have provided exact guidelines for this purpose: use of Artemisia leaves as a powder to be taken, as a tea to be drunk, and as a watery enema in case of unconsciousness. And if these herbal medications really do not suffice by themselves, we provide instructions on how these drugs can be combined with

old, patent-free and therefore cheap so-called “chemical” antimalarials (amodiaquine, etc.), e.g. for AIDS patients or children under the age of five. This way, an African country can effectively build a front against the extremely worrying increase in Malaria, without any increase in costs or begging from Bill Gates. The University of Tübingen has shown that effective blood levels can be achieved: volunteers drank tea prepared from 9g of dried *Artemisia annua* leaves. Blood levels reached 240 nanograms per ml of artemisinin which is 26 times more than is needed to prevent in vitro *Plasmodium falciparum* from reproducing. It is therefore understandable that our Plant A-3 is suitable for both Malaria treatment and as a prophylaxis and why, thanks to a combination of 10 active substances in this plant, there have been no reports of resistance developing.

5. **Results and consequences of our work:**

The Baden-Württemberg federal foundation supported our project on 7th February 2006 with the name “Medicinal plants against Malaria in Adi / Congo and Musoma / Tanzania”. Prof. Fleischer, director of Tropical Medicine at Missio, posed with our medicinal plant at the celebration of his retirement: (Main post 30.09.04: “Amidst greenery: Prof. Klaus Fleischer with *Artemisia annua*, the medicinal plant against Malaria”). Our anamed colleague, Hannelore Klages was awarded the German **Federal Cross of Merit on 10th November 2010 for her work in Burundi! The Secretary of State for Culture, Georg Wacker gave the following reason for this at the awards ceremony: “Spreading the word, Ms Klages has been committed to introducing and disseminating the medicinal antimalarial plant *Artemisia annua* since 2004”. Thanks to our partners, we have now provided 1800 herbal plant gardens and fields with A-3 plants. Amongst the feedback we have received, were reports that this plant is not only effective against Malaria but also against a number of other illnesses. This is partly understandable since even the Industry has patented artemisinin for several other diseases (AIDS, cancer, Lyme disease etc.) A huge field of research lies ahead and there is plenty of work for thousands of anamed collaborators!!!**

Your Hans-Martin Hirt asks God to bless you in this work.