



**CONTACT:**

**SUSANA MCDERMOTT**

**212-870-2938**

[smcdermott@iccr.org](mailto:smcdermott@iccr.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**INVESTORS APPLAUD MERCK'S DECISION TO SHARE CHILDREN'S HIV/AIDS PATENT**

***Faith-based investors say move will make Raltegravir accessible and affordable for millions of vulnerable children***

**NEW YORK, NY – Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015** - Members of the [Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility](#) (ICCR) who have long advocated for patent-licensing agreements to allow for the generics manufacture of critical medicines for the world's poor, welcome the news that Merck (MSD) will be sharing its patent of a key HIV medicine for the development of pediatric formulations with the [Medicines Patent Pool \(MPP\)](#).

The MPP, a UNITAID-backed organization, was established in 2010 to improve access to appropriate, affordable HIV medicines and technologies for people living with HIV in developing countries by making branded drug licenses available for generics manufacture.

***"We are delighted that MSD/Merck has now come on board as part of the increasingly growing MPP partnership with the private sector and we thank ICCR shareholders for their important work in encouraging companies to share patent rights through the MPP,"*** said Greg Perry, Executive Director of the MPP. ***"We are promoting a new public health-orientated business model which I believe encompasses the values and objectives of ICCR, "*** Perry added.

An estimated 3.2 million children are infected with HIV worldwide and almost 800 die every day because they lack access to affordable treatment and care. It is estimated that less than a quarter of the children infected with HIV/AIDS are receiving therapy. In entering raltegravir into the MPP, MSD is ensuring access to this formulation in developing countries, including sub-Saharan Africa, where 98 percent of children with HIV live.

According to UNITAID, there are few efficacious anti-retrovirals available in child-friendly formulations. Problems with palatability (very bad taste), high alcohol content and temperature requirements make them inappropriate for children and unsuitable for scale-up in resource-limited settings. Raltegravir's current availability as chewable tablets and granules for oral suspension could potentially facilitate distribution in pediatric programs.

Members of ICCR have been engaging drug companies, including Merck, as shareholders since 2001 to promote greater access and affordability of HIV/AIDS medicines in low and middle income countries.

Shortly after the formation of the MPP, ICCR convened a roundtable with global pharmaceuticals including Merck to discuss how they could overcome barriers to joining the MPP. Since then six companies engaged by ICCR members have entered into agreements with the MPP sharing formulations for 12 anti-retrovirals and one product for an HIV-related opportunistic infection.

Sr. Judy Byron, OP who leads the shareholder dialogue with MSD on behalf of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary said, ***“For the Sisters, HIV/AIDS is not just an obscure global pandemic. Their sisters staff a school in Lesotho where many of the students go home each day as double orphans. For them, the HIV/AIDS epidemic ravaging our human family bears the faces and names of loved ones.”***

***“We are heartened that Merck has joined the ranks of other global pharmaceutical companies such as Gilead, ViiV, Bristol-Myers Squibb and AbbVie and shared the patent of this critical drug through the MPP. These companies value collaboration and partnership and are taking meaningful action to create an AIDS-free generation,”*** said Cathy Rowan, Director of Socially Responsible Investments for Trinity Health.

**About the [Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility](#) (ICCR)**

Currently celebrating its 44<sup>th</sup> year, ICCR is the pioneer coalition of active shareholders who view the management of their investments as a catalyst for change. Its 300 member organizations with over \$100 billion in AUM have an enduring record of corporate engagement that has demonstrated influence on policies promoting justice and sustainability in the world.

###