



Dr Pilar Mateo Herrero

Fighting malaria

OBG talks to Dr Pilar Mateo Herrero, President, Inesfly

What are the advantages to manufacturing health care products in Africa?

MATEO: Usually it is very common within the health care industry to produce in Europe and export the finished products to Africa. However, we believe there is no reason why our types of products, which are designed to fight malaria and other diseases in Africa, cannot be produced here where they are most needed.

With the right equipment, proper procedures and controls, and quality raw materials, we can ensure that we are able to bring production closer to those who need it. Producing in Africa has a variety of advantages, not only in terms of the issue of export logistics to other African nations, but also in terms of helping create local employment, ensuring the maintenance of revenues in Africa, supporting the local economy, and most of all being close to the local markets. We are aware that the greatest impact can be made by providing our products in low-income areas, and so the ultimate aim should be to create jobs, produce a quality product and make Ghana safer and healthier.

An added advantage is that producing in Africa can assist us in keeping production costs as low as possible and to ensure that the time to market is as short as possible. The data gathered locally will also assist us in any further developments going forward.

In what different ways is the health care industry constrained in Ghana?

MATEO: Ghana is politically stable, which is very important for investors and, of course, for business in general. However, establishing a manufacturing entity is not as easy as many investors might think. It starts with those issues that relate to property and permitting approvals, which are needed to set up your plant and warehouse. Other issues that must be dealt with include the current infrastructure, like water, and sewer, electricity and communication networks.

As the development of the country is still ongoing it is not at the level we are accustomed to in Europe. To

mitigate the various entry barriers, one way of setting up production is to form an alliance with a local partner who already has market expertise and manufacturing knowledge. Export to other African countries is more complicated than we are used to in Europe, but our sister company, for example, has experience exporting their products to over 23 African countries. This will assist us with the common challenges faced in terms of exports, transport and Customs within Africa.

The final issue deals with the local financial institutions. The process of raising funds in Ghana from local financial institutions is not easy, particularly since security demands are quite high, and indeed so too is the local currency lending rate. The development of local manufacturing is crucial to the general growth of the Ghanaian economy as a whole. Without new investments growth and development will decline.

How can malaria infection rates be reduced?

MATEO: Malaria as an epidemic disease is linked to poverty, so the government has a big task in reducing this. The disease previously existed in many parts of the world that we tend to forge, including Mexico, Spain and many other Mediterranean countries, among others. As a result, there are plenty of examples worldwide where governments have shown that it is possible to eradicate it. The biggest problem is that in tropical countries the weather favours the development of the Anopheles species for all 12 months of the year.

What is needed is to bring in new tools to fight the disease, a degree of patience and, finally, social policies designed to improve living conditions and standards of education. Fighting the root cause is always better than supplying the cure. Our product line, made locally, is a new, innovative and safe way to do exactly that. The combined assistance of the various stakeholders including the government, non-governmental organisations, schools and hospitals, as well as individuals can have a major impact on the reduction of malaria and help us to create a safer and healthier environment.