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Canada announces $2.5 million match for Kiwanis International/UNICEF global health campaign

Funds to provide vaccines against deadly newborn killer: maternal and neonatal tetanus

OTTAWA, February 25, 2015 — Kiwanis International learned today during a meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, philanthropist Bill Gates, UNICEF Canada President and CEO David Morley and other nonprofit officials that the Canadian government will match up to CAD$2.5 million in funds raised by UNICEF Canada and Kiwanis Canada toward The Eliminate Project, a Kiwanis-UNICEF initiative to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT) worldwide.

Kiwanis International President and Canadian citizen Dr. John Button attended the meeting, which focused on global efforts to improve the health of mothers and children in developing nations.

“Canada’s announcement is an unprecedented government commitment to join with Kiwanis and UNICEF to rid the world of this terrible, preventable disease. Matched funding will leverage the work of UNICEF Canada and Kiwanis Canada to support a $5 million campaign focused on MNT elimination efforts in Chad, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan and Pakistan,” Dr. Button said.

Globally, The Eliminate Project is raising US$110 million to eliminate MNT in the 24 nations where the disease remains a public health threat. Each year, more than 49,000 newborns die from MNT—134 deaths each day or about one every 11 minutes. The disease is caused by bacteria found everywhere in soil and animal excreta. Tetanus poisoning in a newborn baby causes severe spasms and an excruciatingly painful death. Human contact exacerbates the baby’s pain, so a mother’s touch hurts, leaving the baby to writhe in agony, unheld, for days until he or she dies. It costs about US$1.80 to vaccinate a woman against tetanus, which provides an immunity she passes along to her future babies during childbirth.

Funding through The Eliminate Project supports UNICEF and its partners who have already eliminated MNT in 35 countries. With Kiwanis’ global volunteer network, along with UNICEF’s field staff and technical expertise, The Eliminate Project serves those who live in some of the most remote and underserved areas where healthcare is limited. To date, The Eliminate Project has raised more than US $75 million to support UNICEF’s MNT elimination program.
“Kiwanis International has a long-standing commitment to working with UNICEF to prevent MNT through The Eliminate Project. Today’s announcement in Canada is a significant step toward ridding the world of this cruel, unnecessary disease,” Dr. Button said.

In addition to vaccination initiatives, The Eliminate Project also helps create a path for other services, such as health education, clean water, nutrition and other vaccines.

Visit www.TheEliminateProject.org for more information.

About The Eliminate Project
Kiwanis International’s Global Campaign for Children will save or protect millions of mothers and their future babies. In partnership with UNICEF, Kiwanis is eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus, a disease that kills one baby every 11 minutes and a significant number of women each year. UNICEF and its partners have already eliminated MNT in 35 countries since 1999. The Eliminate Project will raise US$110 million will help fund elimination of the disease in the 24 countries that remain at risk.

About Kiwanis
Founded in 1915, Kiwanis International is a global organization of members dedicated to serving the children of the world. Kiwanis and its family of clubs—including Circle K International for university students, Key Club for students age 14–18, Builders Club for students age 11–14, Kiwanis Kids for students age 6–12 and Aktion Club for adults living with disabilities—dedicate more than 18 million service hours annually to strengthen communities and serve children. The Kiwanis International family comprises nearly 600,000 adult and youth members in 80 countries and geographic areas. For more information about Kiwanis International, please visit www.kiwanis.org.

About UNICEF
UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive from early childhood through adolescence. The world’s largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. Visit www.unicef.ca for more information.

About global MNT elimination efforts
The MNT Elimination Initiative is an international private-public partnership that includes national governments, UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA, GAVI, USAID/Immunization Basics, CDC, UNICEF National Committees, the Government of Japan, Save the Children, PATH, RMHC, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Kiwanis International, Pampers – a division of Procter & Gamble, and BD.