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Lions Clubs International and Gavi Alliance Partner to Protect Children from Measles

Lions to raise US\$30 million for immunization, matched by US\$30 million from UK Government and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

HAMBURG, Germany, 8 July 2013 – The GAVI Alliance and Lions Clubs International today announced a unique partnership designed to protect tens of millions of children in the world’s poorest countries against measles, a highly infectious disease that kills an estimated 430 people every day, mostly in developing countries.

Under the partnership, Lions Clubs – the world’s largest service club organization – will deploy its network of 1.35 million volunteers to raise US\$30 million and to improve access to vaccines through the GAVI Alliance, a public-private partnership whose mission is to save children’s lives and protect people’s health by increasing access to immunization in the world’s poorest countries.

The funds raised by the Lions will be matched by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, bringing the total to US\$60 million. The announcement was made at the Lions Clubs’ 96th annual convention in Hamburg, Germany.

“Lions Clubs International and its members are excited to continue our commitment to the fight against measles and rubella,” said Lions Clubs International Foundation Chair Wing-Kun Tam. “Through our joint efforts with GAVI and other partners, we will increase access to quality immunization services at every level – globally, nationally and locally – to benefit children in developing countries.”

Social mobilization boost

Lions Clubs and GAVI will work with ministries of health in developing countries to ensure children are vaccinated against measles and rubella. Lions will also play a key role in social mobilization efforts by working with local leaders, coordinating community-level publicity and serving as volunteers at vaccination centers. Measles kills about 160,000 people annually, mostly children under age five. GAVI provides the measles vaccine in a single shot with the vaccine against rubella (German measles).

“This new partnership will bring us another step closer to effectively tackling measles and rubella, two serious infectious diseases,” said Dr. Seth Berkley, CEO of the GAVI Alliance. “Teaming up with the vast network of Lions Clubs worldwide will allow GAVI to immunize more children with the measles-rubella vaccine, ultimately reducing the number of measles deaths and cases of Congenital Rubella Syndrome.”



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Lions Clubs has committed to raising US\$30 million for GAVI immunization programs by 2017, when Lions Clubs celebrates its 100th anniversary. Under the GAVI Matching Fund, the UK and Gates Foundation match contributions to GAVI from corporations, foundations, their members, customers, employees and business partners with a goal of raising US\$260 million for immunization through 2015.

“We are grateful for the continued and generous commitment of Lions Clubs International and its members to improving the health of the world’s poorest children,” said Bill Gates Sr., co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “This partnership will help us urgently reach all children, no matter where they live, with the vaccines they need.”

The partnership makes Lions Clubs the largest member of the GAVI Matching Fund, which now has secured more than US\$145 million in private sector gifts and donor matches. Lions Clubs is the Matching Fund’s 10th member.

“Giving the measles vaccine to children is one of the simplest things we can do to protect them from the disease and its dreadful consequences,” said Justine Greening, the UK’s Secretary of State for International Development. “The funds raised by Lions Members and matched by the UK will mean that millions of children will lead healthier and happier lives, able to better contribute to their communities.”

Lions Clubs International, founded in 1917, has more than 46,000 clubs in 207 countries, impacting communities through service projects. Since 1968, it has awarded more than US\$800 million in grants to support humanitarian projects, including anti-measles initiatives.

Measles is a highly infectious and deadly disease, killing an estimated 430 people daily, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), by weakening the immune system, making young children vulnerable to pneumonia, blindness, diarrhea and encephalitis. But measles can be prevented with a safe and inexpensive vaccine. The measles-rubella vaccine funded by GAVI costs around 50 US cents per dose.

Since 2001, measles deaths have been reduced by 71%, notes WHO. GAVI and Lions Clubs have worked with the Measles & Rubella Initiative to support campaigns that have contributed to this reduction. Recent experience shows that failure to give enough children their first dose of measles vaccination through routine immunization can result in serious outbreaks. As a result, the GAVI-Lions Clubs partnership will focus on support of routine immunization and strengthening health systems. By 2020, more than 700 million children in 49 countries are expected to be immunized against measles and rubella.

“These additional resources will help countries reach the 20 million children who have yet to receive measles vaccine, and will provide further momentum to bring us closer to



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eliminating measles,” said Dr. Stephen Cochi, a senior advisor on immunization at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, on behalf of the Measles & Rubella Initiative.

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GAVI Alliance

The GAVI Alliance is a public-private partnership committed to saving children’s lives and protecting people’s health by increasing access to immunization in developing countries. The Alliance brings together developing country and donor governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, the vaccine industry, technical agencies, civil society, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private sector partners. GAVI uses innovative finance mechanisms, including co-financing by recipient countries, to secure sustainable funding and adequate supply of quality vaccines. Since 2000, GAVI has financed the immunization of an additional 370 million children and prevented more than 5.5 million premature deaths. Learn more at www.gavialliance.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.

GAVI is funded by governments [Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States], the European Commission, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as private and corporate partners [Absolute Return for Kids, Anglo American plc., The Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, Comic Relief, Dutch Postcode Lottery, His Highness Sheikh Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, JP Morgan, “la Caixa” Foundation, LDS Charities and Vodafone].

For more information visit gavialliance.org

Lions Club International

Lions Clubs International is the largest service club organization in the world. Our 1.35 million members in more than 46,000 clubs are serving communities in 207 countries and geographical areas around the globe. Since 1917, Lions clubs have aided the blind and visually impaired, championed youth initiatives and strengthened local communities through hands-on service and humanitarian projects. Lions Clubs International Foundation is the charitable arm of Lions Clubs International. Through the One Shot, One Life: Lions Measles Initiative, Lions and LCIF have helped vaccinate 20 million children against measles alongside its partners since 2010. Learn more about LCI at www.lionsclubs.org.