



EIGHT THOUSAND VOLUNTEERS PARTNER WITH THE GLOBAL NETWORK TO COMBAT NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES IN BURUNDI

Nearly One Million Burundians to Benefit from 2007 NTD Control Initiative

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Sept. 12, 2007—A first-ever campaign to control and/or eliminate seven poverty-promoting, neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) in the African nation of Burundi—the world’s seventh, least developed country—has been launched by the Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases (Global Network), an alliance led by the Sabin Vaccine Institute. The Global Network is partnering with the Burundi Ministry of Public Health, the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC), the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (SCI) at Imperial College of London and CBM to train more than 8,000 Volunteer Community Drug Distributors to administer “rapid impact packages” to more than 800,000 fellow Burundians in 2007. Planning is currently underway to expand NTD control coverage throughout the country in 2008.

These “rapid impact packages” are comprised of four drugs to treat the seven, most common NTDs—safely, effectively and affordably—for an all-inclusive cost of only 50 cents per person, per year. They are the core component of Sabin and the Global Network’s integrated control strategy, now regarded as a model for global health.

About NTDs

Neglected tropical diseases are 13 parasitic and bacterial infections that afflict more than one billion of the world’s poorest people. NTDs blind, disfigure, disable, kill and contribute to an ongoing cycle of poverty and stigmatization that leaves millions unable to work or participate in family or community life. Despite their pervasiveness, NTDs are often overshadowed, in terms of visibility and resource commitment, by the “Big Three”—HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria—which is why they are designated “neglected” diseases. The Global Network’s

integrated control strategy is targeting the following seven NTDs: ascariasis; trichuriasis; hookworm infection; schistosomiasis; lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis); trachoma; and onchocerciasis (river blindness).

About the Burundi NTD Control Program

The Global Network's NTD control campaign in Burundi, scheduled to run through 2010, is being funded under an \$8.9 million grant from a client of Geneva Global, a charitable investment advisory firm. It was officially launched in the presence of 2,000 villagers in Bururi Province by Madame Rose Gahiru, Minister of Public Health, and other government representatives, in addition to partnering nongovernmental organizations. The event featured singers and dancers in performances that dramatized the destructive impact of NTDs and the benefits of treatment and prevention. This month, a national mapping program to assess the impact of the seven NTDs will begin, with results anticipated in December. A national strategy will then be created to treat the entire Burundi population of 8.4 million people.

This campaign builds upon the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control's (APOC) successful strategy in tackling onchocerciasis in Burundi and throughout Africa, which included the creation of the Community-Directed Treatment with Ivermectin (CDTI) strategy. CDTI is a network of Volunteer Community Drug Distributors who administer the appropriate treatment to their own communities.

"To be effective, NTD control must be community-driven, with volunteers working in their home districts to educate their neighbors about the true burden of NTDs, followed by administration of the 'rapid impact package,'" said Professor Alan Fenwick, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative at Imperial College of London and director of the Burundi campaign. "Powered by 8,000 community volunteers, I am confident the program will ultimately succeed in helping millions of Burundians lead healthier and more productive lives."

"The devastating impact of NTDs on generation after generation of Burundians must end, which is why this integrated NTD control program, led by the Ministry of Public Health, is so vital," said Peter Hotez, M.D., Ph.D., President of the Sabin Vaccine Institute and Professor and Chair of Microbiology, Immunology and Tropical Medicine at George Washington University. "Our goal is to make the Burundi campaign a model for NTD control throughout the developing world."

Joining the Fight Against NTDs

NTD control costs only 50 cents per person, per year. This cost includes drug delivery, health education materials, training of personnel, monitoring and evaluation. To join the fight against NTDs, you can make a secure, online, tax-deductible donation at www.gnntdc.org by clicking the “Get Involved” option.

About Sabin Vaccine Institute and the Global Network for NTDs

The Sabin Vaccine Institute (www.sabin.org) is a global health, medical research organization based in Washington, D.C. that is leading the fight against diseases of poverty. Sabin serves as Secretariat of the Global Network for NTDs (www.gnntdc.org), which was launched at the Clinton Global Initiative in 2006. The Global Network is an alliance of leading organizations dedicated to reducing poverty and improving global health through tropical disease control. It includes: the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (Imperial College of London); Sabin Vaccine Institute; International Trachoma Initiative; Lymphatic Filariasis Support Centre (Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine); The Task Force for Child Survival and Development; Helen Keller International; and the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

###