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**THE NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASE CONTROL PROGRAM FUNDED BY THE
UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
DEMONSTRATES SUCCESS ITS FIRST THREE YEARS**

New Report Reveals National-Scale Program to Control and Eliminate Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) Exceeds Its Five-Year Goals in Three Years, Supporting Treatment of 98 Million Persons Worldwide

Deerfield, IL, January 6, 2011 – An analysis of the first three years of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) Control Program has documented the outcome of efforts to implement national-scale programs to control or eliminate NTDs through public-private partnerships. The program, targeting lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis (ascariasis, hookworm and trichuriasis) and blinding trachoma through mass drug administration, has reached 98 million persons in 12 countries with 222 million treatments of donated drugs valued at more than \$1.4 billion. In addition, 220,000 persons were trained to implement these programs locally, according to a report released in the January issue of the *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*.

The USAID-funded NTD Control Program relies on public-private partnerships to bring together public health implementers, public and private donors, and key pharmaceutical firms (GlaxoSmithKline, Johnson & Johnson, Merck and Co., Inc., Merck-Serono and Pfizer) in an effort to rid the world of treatable NTDs. The NTD Control Program works in concert with World Health Organization guidelines to facilitate national Ministry of Health programs that support, organize, implement and monitor integrated programs targeting seven NTDs through preventative chemotherapy given once or twice a year.

“We are very excited about the results and are thrilled that we are learning how to expand effective, cost-efficient strategies to a national level in countries burdened by NTDs,” said lead author Mary Linehan, Operations Director, Neglected Tropical Disease Control Program, RTI International. “The results are a tribute to the hard work of the national Ministries of Health, USAID and our pharmaceutical partners who have recognized that scaling to a national level is critical to break transmission of the NTDs.”

NTDs are a group of conditions afflicting more than one billion of the poorest, most disenfranchised persons worldwide causing significant morbidity, mortality, severe disfigurement, disability and blindness. Integrated efforts often received minimal attention prior to the recent USAID-led funding initiatives. NTDs are among the leading perpetrators of poverty because they diminish economic productivity and impair intellectual and physical development of persons in affected nations – thereby reinforcing a cycle of poverty and illness.

“2010 saw an extraordinary increase in mass drug administrations for NTDs, showing that nationally-scaled programs are successful,” said Dr. Peter Hotez, MD, PhD, President, American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. “Millions of persons received the treatments necessary to improve health and economies across the world. With plans to further increase the number of countries targeted that have national control programs, 2011 should be a banner year for the control and elimination of NTDs, which unnecessarily affect millions of persons every year.”

About the program

The USAID NTD Control Program, initiated in September 2006, defined 5-year targets of 160 million preventive chemotherapy treatments to 40 million people in 15 countries through integrated NTD programs. The stated aims of the program have been 1) to support and empower national governments to develop integrated NTD control programs embedded, where possible, within existing service delivery platforms and to lead these programs in scaling-up activities to full national levels; 2) to provide technical assistance for planning, budgeting, reporting and complying with international standards and guidelines to improve program integration; 3) to promote cost-efficiency, improved integration strategies and effective advocacy; and 4) to assure national ownership, continued commitment and resource mobilization for sustained support for NTD control.

Grants were provided to a team of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and implementing partners to support integrated NTD control programs organized and led by the governments of selected countries. The support from the U.S. Government was intended to build on existing commitments by governments and other donors and fill financial and technical gaps that were preventing national programs from reaching full national scale.

All drugs were distributed by the national Ministries of Health whose national NTD control programs determined how best to implement their MDAs. The drugs were used according to WHO recommendations. Because knowledge of the distribution of each NTD in a country is absolutely essential for developing any implementation plan, disease-specific mapping was carried out according to guidelines recommended by WHO and its partners.

In addition, training was designed to empower each community to treat NTDs within its own population. The NTD Control Program supported training of community-based health workers and drug distributors operating at levels from the central ministries to individual communities. This cascade of training has facilitated social mobilization, community outreach, supply chain organization and technical implementation.

About the ASTMH

The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, founded in 1903, is a worldwide organization of scientists, clinicians and program professionals whose mission is to promote global health through the prevention and control of infectious and other diseases that disproportionately afflict the global poor.

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