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**STATEMENT BY**

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NEONATAL TETANUS) PROJECT, KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS,  
AND RELATED PROGRAMS COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**

**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**MARCH 19, 2013**

Madam Chairwoman, I am Jeffrey Wolff, Kiwanis International's volunteer Campaign Vice Chairman for The Eliminate Project. I live in Chantilly, Virginia, and am here today representing more than 5,100 Kiwanis clubs and more than 432,000 Kiwanis-family members in the United States.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of The Eliminate Project: Kiwanis eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus. Tetanus is a preventable disease that kills one baby every nine minutes. We are seeking the support of this Committee to encourage USAID to provide, through UNICEF, funding to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus. This funding would come from the Maternal and Child Health account.

We are also seeking your support to provide \$750 million in fiscal year 2014 for the overall account for Maternal and Child Health.

On behalf of Kiwanis International and Kiwanis International Foundation, I want to thank you for your past and continuing support of our first Global Campaign for Children, ending Iodine Deficiency Disorders. I urge you to also support our second and current campaign to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus from the face of the earth.

### **MATERNAL AND NEONATAL TETANUS & THE ELIMINATE PROJECT**

The Eliminate Project: Kiwanis eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus is a global campaign that will save or protect more than 61 million mothers and newborns. Tetanus can infect newborns, spreading quickly, causing terrible pain and killing within days. It's a terrible disease where mothers cannot even touch or comfort their babies due to the excruciating pain. But it is highly preventable.

During this project, Kiwanis International is focusing where the need is greatest on the populations least served. In fact, we are tackling the hardest leg of a difficult journey. MNT is on the brink of elimination, but sorely needs a champion to complete the work.

Kiwanis International is committed to raising \$110 million to immunize more than 61 million women in countries where the disease is still a major health problem. Kiwanis' global volunteer network and strength in reaching communities and leaders, along with the UNICEF's field staff,

technical expertise and unbeatable supply chain, will help eliminate this cruel, centuries-old disease.

We believe we have a very effective partnership with UNICEF and urge you to support UNICEF in its request for funding in the amount of \$135 million for fiscal year 2014.

### **MATERNAL AND NEONATAL TETANUS**

MNT results when tetanus spores, which are present in soil everywhere, enter the bloodstream. It is mainly caused by a lack of access to sanitary birthing conditions, unclean instruments used to cut the umbilical cord and unclean post-partum cord care.

Once the disease is contracted, a new-born usually dies within seven days. The fatality rate can be as high as 100 percent in underserved areas.

Most mothers and newborns who die of tetanus live in areas of Africa, and South and Southeast Asia, where many women are poor, have little access to health care, have limited information about safe delivery procedures and continue harmful cord care practices.

MNT is easily prevented by giving women of childbearing age a series of three vaccine doses, which costs roughly \$1.80. This cost includes the vaccinations, syringes, safe storage, transportation and more.

Women who are properly vaccinated with the tetanus vaccine will have immunity through most of their childbearing years. Babies born to mothers who have been vaccinated will be protected through the first two months of life.

When women are vaccinated for tetanus and learn about maternal health, they become empowered to take control of their well-being and that of their newborns. We believe these women matter, they deserve to give birth to healthy babies and their babies deserve to achieve their full human potential.

## **PROGRESS**

The Eliminate Project supports UNICEF and its partners, which have already eliminated MNT in 29 countries. Thirty countries remain at risk, with more than 100 million women who need to be vaccinated.

Between 1999 and 2010, nearly 100 million women in some of the most remote places were protected against tetanus, saving thousands of newborns from death due to tetanus every year.

Kiwanis International is now taking on this cause. We will raise \$110 million by 2015. Since launching our fundraising campaign July 2011, nearly \$27 million has been raised, nearly 5,500 Kiwanis members have committed to four years of volunteer service and more than 3,500 clubs have contributed to the fundraising campaign.

I can visualize a world without tetanus. Recently, I traveled to Cambodia as part of a UNICEF delegation to witness UNICEF's work on the ground. I was truly inspired by the women we saw who traveled long distances to a local health center. Some were there to give birth; others were ensuring their children received proper vaccinations. These women simply want a better life for their children, something all parents like me can agree on. I was also impressed by UNICEF's village outreach services. Once a month, trained health workers visit remote villages to deliver health services, including administering the tetanus vaccine. Together, we can ensure that all women are able to receive the tetanus vaccine anywhere in the world.

The maternal neonatal tetanus elimination plans are in place. Countries are ready for implementation. All that remains is one final funding push. One push to rid the earth of this devastating disease.

Madam Chairwoman, I ask you to join us in this final push. Help us to eliminate this terrible disease and ensure that no baby suffers this excruciating seven-day death ever again.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.