



# Kiwanis®

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**STATEMENT BY  
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**SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS,  
AND RELATED PROGRAMS  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**MARCH 12, 2019**

Madam Chairwoman, I am Emily Rice, the 2018-19 volunteer President of Key Club International, Kiwanis International's service organization for high school students. I am a high school senior from Minnesota. It is an honor to testify before the Committee today on behalf of more than 5,200 Kiwanis clubs and more than 432,000 Kiwanis-family members in the United States. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Kiwanis/UNICEF program to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT). We are seeking the support of this Committee to recommend in fiscal year 2020 \$2,000,000 for maternal and neonatal tetanus. This funding would come from the U.S. Agency for International Development's Global Health, Maternal and Child Health account.

Tetanus is a preventable disease that kills one baby every fifteen minutes. The participation by the United States is imperative to the success of eliminating MNT. It is a privilege to be the first President of Key Club International to appear before this Committee. Key Club International is a high school program of Kiwanis International consisting of over 266,000 members in more than 5,200 clubs in the United States and 37 other nations. Key Club members throughout the United States and other countries have elected me as President of Key Club International.

There are thousands of students my age in the United States and around the world raising funds for the Kiwanis and UNICEF effort to eliminate MNT. We are committed to this cause – just like our adult members of Kiwanis.

## **A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

I have been participating in *The Eliminate Project* with my home Kiwanis Club, Key Club, and Builders' Club for the past five years. Every year, we as a group review the effects, hardships, and tragedies that occur due to Maternal Neonatal Tetanus.

It pains me to hear the stories of mothers who have lost their children due to MNT.

Thankfully, our club has raised enough money throughout the years to save thousands of lives, but our work alone as a club, and as an organization, is not quite enough. On behalf of Kiwanis International and the Kiwanis Children's Fund, I want to thank the Committee for its support in fiscal years 2018 and 2019 appropriations for the \$1 million in funding for MNT through public-private partnerships to prevent tetanus in newborn children.

I hope that the Committee will include \$2 million for MNT for the same purpose in the fiscal year 2020 State, Foreign Operations report.

I also want to thank you for the Committee's past and continuing support of our first Global Campaign for Children, ending Iodine Deficiency Disorders.

## **KIWANIS COMMITMENT TO ELIMINATE MATERNAL AND NEONATAL TETANUS**

In July of 2011, Kiwanis launched *The Eliminate Project*: Kiwanis eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus, a global campaign that will save or protect more than 61 million mothers and newborns.

In partnership with UNICEF, Kiwanis is targeting the poorest, most underserved women and children on Earth with proven and cost-effective interventions.

By targeting some of the poorest, most underserved women and children in the world, *The Eliminate Project* is also paving the way for other interventions that will boost maternal health and child survival.

As part of this campaign, Kiwanis International committed to and has raised \$110 million to immunize women in countries where MNT is still a major health threat. Key Club International is playing an important part in this effort.

More than 6,000 Kiwanis-family members and clubs in the United States alone have contributed to the fundraising campaign.

During this project, Kiwanis International is focusing where the need is greatest: the populations least served. We are now tackling the hardest leg of a difficult journey. MNT has been

eliminated in 45 countries. Fourteen countries remain at risk, with more than 52 million women who still need to be vaccinated.

Since 2000, MNT has been eliminated in 44 countries, thanks to the work of national governments, UNICEF and partners. Between 1999 and 2017, 152 million women in some of the world's most remote places were protected with the tetanus vaccine, saving thousands of newborns from death due to tetanus every year.

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 and pave the way for other interventions.

In July 2014, USAID announced that it was joining as a partner with Kiwanis to help eliminate MNT. Kiwanis has been working in partnership with USAID to strengthen their programs on MNT and to provide funding through the UNICEF global effort.

## **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.

In many developing countries, women give birth at home without the support of a healthcare worker and without a clean, sterile blade to cut the umbilical cord. This, and other factors, can lead to tetanus poisoning in the new born baby, causing severe spasms and an excruciatingly painful death.

It is a terrible disease in which human contact exacerbates the baby's pain; a mother's touch hurts, leaving the baby to writhe in agony, upheld for days until he or she dies.

Mothers are not even able to comfort their babies due to the excruciating pain they would experience from a loving touch. The fatality rate for MNT can be as high as 100 percent in underserved areas. Once the disease is contracted, a newborn usually dies within seven days.

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 post-partum cord care practices.

MNT is easily prevented by giving women of childbearing age a series of three vaccine doses, which costs roughly \$3.00. 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.

### **SUPPORT FOR PARTNERS**

We believe we have a very effective partnership with UNICEF and urge you to support UNICEF in its request for a U.S. fiscal year 2020 contribution for the UNICEF core resource budget of \$132.5 million. We also support funding for the Maternal and Child Health account at a level of \$900 million.

### **CONCLUSION**

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

Madam Chairwoman, as high school students here in the United States, we are doing our part. Won't you help us boost our efforts by recommending \$2 million within the Global Health, Maternal and Child Health account for the elimination of maternal and neonatal tetanus?

Thank you for your consideration.