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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, 2020

Madam Chairwoman, it is an honor to testify before the Committee today on behalf of 550,000 Kiwanis-family members in nearly 16,000 Kiwanis family clubs, with more than half located within the United States. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of the Kiwanis/UNICEF program to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus. We are seeking the support of this Committee to recommend in fiscal year 2021 \$2,000,000 for maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT). 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 seventeen minutes. The participation by the United States is imperative to the success of eliminating MNT.

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 newborn 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.

The Kiwanis family is committed to privately raising more than \$100 million to eliminate this disease. We are asking for your continued support to help us eliminate MNT.

I have been an active member of our organization since my youth. It is a privilege to now serve in the leadership role of Kiwanis International and the Kiwanis Children's Fund (the charitable arm of the Kiwanis organization).

I would like to thank you for your support towards eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus as well as your past and continued support for ending Iodine Deficiency Disorders.

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

As the executive director of an organization that has members in more than 80 nations around the globe, I have had the opportunity to travel to and experience unique cultures in almost half of those countries.

„ I have witnessed firsthand the success of our public-private partnership to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus. For example, in Madagascar, I was present to see immunization day at several health clinics in villages seemingly in the middle of nowhere, and I was amazed to see how many mothers and their young children showed up to receive a tetanus immunization.

MNT immunization day also meant an opportunity to provide measles vaccinations and distribute malaria bed nets. Dozens of very young children were fascinated with my cell phone camera, and my ability to take their photo and show it to them immediately. They laughed with each photo I showed them.

I inquired about their heads of thick black hair with gold highlights and was informed that the lightened hair color was an indicator of malnutrition. Virtually all the children showed this condition. I had already seen the statistics that in Madagascar, at that time, the mortality rate for children under the age of five was slightly more than fifty deaths for every 1,000 children.

That meant for the hundred or so children that I saw in a single day, approximately five would not survive beyond a fifth birthday.

But because of the Kiwanis/UNICEF/USAID cooperation, these children had a much better chance of surviving. Our investment there had brought the death rate for neonatal tetanus down to less than one death per thousand live births. Fortunately, Madagascar was validated as being “tetanus free” by the World Health Organization, and together we funded the work that made that outcome possible.

More than two-thirds of our global Kiwanis family membership is American. Our US members have been extremely generous of their personal resources to raise most of the US\$100 million to date to eliminate MNT.

But we are committed to global elimination. And our formal partnership is one of the best examples of US community leaders working together with our government and our friends in

nations around the world to save the lives of babies, born and unborn, and to protect the lives of women of reproductive age.

During my visit to numerous health clinics in Madagascar, I was proud to see so many of the local health workers wearing clothing that bore the USAID logo, and the signage that often is attached to the shipments of health materials that reads “USAID - From the American People.”

I know my tax dollars are contributing in ways that make me feel gratified. I can continue to commit to you that our organization takes zero – none of these appropriated funds – for administration of the program. Every tax dollar appropriated goes to the cause, and we will continue to match every dollar with our own fundraising.

I am the father of two very healthy, very generous children, both of whom are now adults. My Marine sergeant son has seen deployments and had experiences with life and death in several parts of the world. Most recently, his time in Afghanistan allowed him to also see children and families in a nation with an under five mortality rate more than double that of Madagascar. Afghanistan remains one of a dozen nations we have not been able to validate as tetanus free. But we are close. We are so very close.

Today about 85 infants will die from MNT somewhere in the world. Our commitment is to reduce that number to zero. Our commitment to do so remains, and we look forward to continuing our joint effort with UNICEF and USAID. Thank you for your support in this important work.

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* has also been 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 47 countries, thanks to the work of national governments, UNICEF and partners. Between 1999 and 2018, more than 154 million women in some of the world's most remote places were vaccinated against tetanus, 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.

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 have a very effective partnership with UNICEF and urge you to support UNICEF in its request for a U.S. fiscal year 2021 contribution for the UNICEF core resource budget of \$134 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, I ask you to join us in this final push. Help us to eliminate this terrible disease. Help us ensure that no baby suffers this excruciating seven-day death ever again 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.