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INMED Project Selected by Saving Lives at Birth: A Grand Challenge for Development

[STERLING, VA, USA: August 14, 2018]: Imagine watching your newborn develop permanent neurological problems because you don't have access to simple jaundice treatment. It's practically unimaginable in the United States, but in poorer countries like Peru, the rate of brain damage due to severe jaundice in newborns is up to 20 times higher than in developed countries. Recognizing the need, INMED Partnerships with Children has teamed up with Little Sparrows Technologies, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Bilimetrix to implement the Bili-Kit™, a toolkit of three portable technologies to screen, diagnose and treat neonatal jaundice—even in remote regions. The project was one of four selected out of 10 finalists and nearly 500 applicants for the Saving Lives at Birth: A Grand Challenge for Development competition.

The Saving Lives at Birth initiative is a multilateral partnership that funds groundbreaking, sustainable innovations to save the lives of mothers and newborns in underserved regions of the world. Launched in 2011, the partnership of philanthropic heavyweights includes USAID, the Government of Norway (NORAD), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Grand Challenges Canada (funded by the Government of Canada), the U.K.'s Department for International Development (DFID), and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

The INMED-Little Sparrows team piqued the interest of evaluators for its portable, comprehensive approach to screening, treating and diagnosing neonatal jaundice, ideal for remote, low-resource communities, as well as its ability to scale the innovation in Peru. Neonatal jaundice is a common condition that peaks in intensity during the first week of life. Occurring in approximately 60% of term infants, it is usually self-resolving. However, an estimated 10% of all newborns have jaundice sufficiently severe to require intervention. In Peru, more than 90% of health facilities lack the equipment and training to adequately diagnose and treat neonatal jaundice, contributing to a rate of jaundice-linked brain damage (kernicterus) 10 to 20 times higher than in high-income countries.

"The Bili-Kit™ is a game changer, because each component fills a critical need in low-resource environments," notes Dr. Linda Pfeiffer, President and CEO of INMED Partnerships for Children. The Bili-Ruler™, developed by Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, is a simple, dependable and easy to use for screening, while the Bilistick®, developed by Bilimetrix, is a less intrusive means for quantitative diagnosis, eliminating the need for collecting a vial of blood. The uniquely portable, battery-capable Bili-Hut™ developed by Little Sparrows Technologies will bring neonatal jaundice treatment to remote regions that lack access to adequate healthcare.

The Bili-Hut™ is durable yet lightweight, folding flat for easy transport. "Its high-intensity LEDs meet AAP recommendations, and we offer battery-powered capability for areas with unreliable line power," explains Donna Brezinski, founder and CEO of Little Sparrows Technologies and



inventor of the device. “The best part about the Bili-Hut™ is that it can sit right next to the mother’s bed in the hospital or at home.”

Leveraging the distribution infrastructure and multi-sector partnerships it created to mobilize a national deworming campaign that treats more than 6 million individuals annually in Peru, INMED will implement and scale the Bili-Kit™ to address critical gaps in jaundice management. In addition to introducing the new technologies to a broad range of healthcare providers, INMED will improve service delivery of jaundice care by training and equipping local providers and generating demand through screening and education programs designed to engage local community health agents and parents.

“We’re excited to partner with partner with Little Sparrows and its collaborators to implement the Bili-Kit™ in Peru,” says Pfeiffer. “We are grateful for Saving Lives at Birth’s interest in helping us scale this innovation. Together, we’re going to make a meaningful impact on reducing infant mortality in distressed communities.”

About INMED Partnerships for Children:

INMED Partnerships for Children is a nonprofit international development organization that has worked in more than 100 countries to help disadvantaged children get a healthy start in life by facilitating access to basic healthcare, education and socioeconomic opportunities for success. INMED’s programs in adaptive agriculture/aquaponics, health and nutrition, and socioeconomic opportunities break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and have made a sustainable impact on the lives of millions of children and their families since 1986.

About Little Sparrows Technologies & the Bili-Kit™ Partners:

Little Sparrows Technologies, Project Co-PI. Little Sparrows Technologies is a social enterprise founded in 2013 by Harvard physicians Dr. Donna Brezinski, a neonatologist, and Dr. Gary Gilbert, a hematologist and medical scientist. In addition to receiving a seed grant from Saving Lives at Birth in 2014, Little Sparrows has been funded by the National Institutes of Health to advance the Bili-Hut™ device. Most recently, Little Sparrows received a 2018 Patents for Humanity Award from the US Patent and Trademark Office, recognizing the Bili-Hut™ as a game-changing technology designed to meet global humanitarian challenges.

Bilimetrix. Bilimetrix was established to commercialize Bilistick®, a novel point-of-care device to measure serum bilirubin levels. This device is of high value in low-resource regions of the world that lack capability for traditional laboratory analysis of serum bilirubin. The project originated with Drs. Claudio Tiribelli and Richard Wennberg, experienced clinical and basic science researchers and internationally recognized experts in bilirubin and neonatal jaundice. A recipient of a 2013 saving Lives at Birth seed grant, Bilimetrix has extensive experience in international deployment of Bilistick® through validation trials in numerous countries, including Nigeria, Egypt, Indonesia and Vietnam. Led by Chief Operating Officer Dr. Carlos Coda Zabetta, the Bilimetrix team will work collaboratively with Dr. Brezinski to create the training materials and protocol for the Bilistick® and provide materials and ongoing technical support.

Brigham and Women’s Hospital (BWH) – Global Newborn Health Lab. The Global Newborn Health Lab at BWH is comprised of recognized experts in the deployment of interventions in maternal-newborn health and the study of their efficacy in improvement of health outcomes. Led by Dr. Anne CC Lee, the BWH team has developed and validated the Bili-Ruler™. This novel jaundice-screening tool will assist community health agents in early recognition of neonatal jaundice, enabling the timely diagnosis and treatment necessary to improve outcomes for newborns at risk.

Photo Captions:



INMED Photo 1: The Bili-Kit is a portable, battery-capable toolkit that will allow neonatal jaundice screening, diagnosis and treatment to remote regions that lack access to adequate healthcare.



INMED Photo 2: Dr. Donna Brezinski, founder and CEO of Little Sparrows Technologies, hugs Dr. Linda Pfeiffer, founder and CEO of INMED Partnerships for Children, as their project is selected out of more than 500 entries for the Saving Lives at Birth Grand Challenge.