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U.S., Tanzania governments partner with Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative to open two new AIDS centers

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HOUSTON -- (Aug. 29, 2008) -- A public-private partnership will enable the Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative (BIPAI) to significantly expand its network of centers of excellence in Sub-Saharan Africa by building two clinics in Tanzania, a country hit hard by HIV/AIDS.

The United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) announced today a grant award to BIPAI of \$22.5 million over five years to support the operations of the two centers of excellence and associated satellite clinic facilities.

His Excellency Mr. Jakaya Kikwete, president of the United Republic of Tanzania, participated in the announcement in Washington D.C. The Tanzanian government is working in partnership with BIPAI to establish the two centers in Mbeya and Mwanza and to ensure their integration into existing public health programs. It is expected that the centers will provide care directly to at least 15,000 children. Another 4,400 children will receive care in associated satellite facilities.

BIPAI is based at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) and Texas Children's Hospital in Houston. It has secured additional funding totaling more than \$6 million for the Tanzania program from several private donors, including Abbott Fund, the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, Jan and Dan Duncan and the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

The new centers of excellence in Tanzania will be the seventh and eighth established by BIPAI in Africa. Dr. Mark Kline, president of BIPAI, said the large country in East Africa is home to about 1.4 million people with HIV/AIDS. Currently, there are few resources for the care and treatment of HIV-infected children.

"We are thrilled to partner with the government of Tanzania in the establishment of these new children's centers of excellence. We are deeply grateful to PEPFAR and to the U.S. Agency for International Development and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention teams for all of their support, as well as to the generous private donors that made all of this possible," said Kline, also professor of pediatrics at BCM and chief of retrovirology at Texas Children's.

This is the first time BIPAI has located two centers of excellence in one country. Other African centers are located in Botswana, Malawi, Uganda, Lesotho, Burkina Faso and Swaziland. Satellite clinics and outreach programs

also have been established by BIPAI in each country to maximize the reach and impact of the centers of excellence. The first BIPAI center of excellence was established in Constanta, Romania in 2001.

The centers of excellence provide comprehensive pediatric and family-centered HIV/AIDS care and treatment. BIPAI provides ongoing support to each center, including health professional training and strengthening of health systems. Relationships will be established between existing BIPAI centers of excellence in Kampala, Uganda and Lilongwe, Malawi, and the new centers in Mwanza and Mbeya, for purposes of supporting the implementation of all clinical programs.

Each BIPAI center of excellence is staffed predominantly by local health professionals, supplemented as needed by American physicians from BIPAI's Pediatric AIDS Corps, jointly supported by BCM and Bristol-Myers Squibb. Sixty Pediatric AIDS Corps physicians currently are assigned to seven countries in Africa.

Abbott Fund is contributing \$2.65 million to BIPAI's program in Tanzania, which will be used to support initial operations and construction of the center in Mbeya. The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is committing \$2 million to the program, to be used for construction of the center in Mwanza. Both foundations are long-time supporters of BIPAI's programs for HIV-infected children across Africa and around the world.

"The clinic fulfills a critical need in Tanzania, where the Abbott Fund has been working in partnership with the government for more than a decade to improve health care, not only for people with HIV, but also for those with other chronic health issues," said Catherine V. Babington, president of the Abbott Fund. "The construction of the first pediatric clinic in Tanzania with our longstanding partner, BIPAI, marks another critical step in the Abbott Fund's longstanding commitment to addressing the health of children with HIV."

"The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation's Secure the Future program and its successful pediatric initiative with the Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital is grounded in the concept of public-private partnership," said John Damonti, president of the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation. "This new commitment from the United States Government to enhance pediatric care and support of children in partnership with the government of Tanzania and BIPAI will leverage and multiply the impact of the private sector support."

The two new centers of excellence will be affiliated with and located on the campuses of the Bugando Medical Centre in Mwanza and the Mbeya Referral Hospital in Mbeya.

The Mwanza region has a population of nearly 3 million and a 7.2 percent HIV prevalence rate. The Mbeya region has a population of over 2 million, and an HIV prevalence rate of 13.5 percent.

Houstonians Jan and Dan Duncan and the Houston-based Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word are providing substantial financial support for the establishment of the BIPAI program in Tanzania. Their gifts helped make possible the public-private partnership with PEPFAR and the U.S. government.

Jan and Dan Duncan are generous supporters of many programs at BCM and Texas Children's Hospital.

"Dan and I are so happy for the many children who will be helped by these two new children's centers in Tanzania," said Jan Duncan. "I attended a presentation Mark Kline gave in Houston last year and was very impressed with the impact of the program. What a blessing the new clinics will be in the lives of so many."

The Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word were among the very first supporters of BIPAI almost ten years ago.

"It is a privilege to partner with BIPAI and Dr. Kline to bring compassionate, life-saving care and treatment to the most vulnerable population fighting HIV/AIDS, the children," said a spokesperson for the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. "The expansion of this program into Tanzania and the significant commitment announced today is a turning point for the children - and future - of Tanzania."

BIPAI's two home institutions, BCM and Texas Children's Hospital, are each contributing financially and in faculty and staff support for the project. Texas Children's has pledged \$600,000 to the project and BCM, \$150,000.

"As a result of Dr. Mark Kline's leadership and dedication, BIPAI at Texas Children's Hospital has grown immensely with one AIDS clinic in Romania, six in Africa and additional clinics under construction in Tanzania," said Mark Wallace, president and CEO of Texas Children's. "Dr. Kline and his team have trained and placed health professionals and treated a larger number of HIV-infected children than any other organization in the world. We are extremely proud to be a part of this unparalleled initiative and confident Dr. Kline's tireless efforts will continue to heal sick children across the world."

"The new program in Tanzania is a natural expansion of our global network of centers of excellence. Through the expertise of the outstanding BIPAI team, including Pediatric AIDS Corps physicians, these clinics will offer state-of-the-art care to children and their families," said BCM President Dr. Peter G. Traber. "We are immensely proud of the work of this dedicated team of people who continue to prove that a difference can be made in the world by a commitment to excellence."

An initial complement of five BIPAI physicians and additional support staff will begin clinical activities in Mwanza and Mbeya by Oct. 1. Until the centers of excellence are built and opened, they will work out of transitional facilities at Bugando Medical Centre and Mbeya Referral Hospital. Construction on the centers of excellence will begin in December, with opening anticipated in December 2009.

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