



GLOBAL MEDICINES PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

**The Barr Foundation and VillageReach Announce New Program
to Improve Supply Chain for Essential Medicines**

*Three-year Pharmacy & Supply Chain Strengthening Program
to improve access to essential medicines in Malawi*

NEW YORK, USA, September 25, 2012 – VillageReach, the Seattle-based social enterprise that increases access to quality healthcare for underserved communities, and the Barr Foundation, a private foundation based in Boston, today announced the launch of a new program in Malawi to increase healthcare access through improvements in the public health supply chain. The announcement was made in conjunction with the 2012 Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Annual Meeting in New York City.

The program is launched as a partnership between VillageReach, the Barr Foundation, the Malawi Ministry of Health, the Malawi College of Health Sciences, and the University of Washington Global Medicines Program. The Barr Foundation will provide approximately 75% of the financial support for the \$2 million initiative. VillageReach is seeking additional funders to join the project.

Currently, billions of dollars of donor-funded health commodities, vital to the treatment of high-burden diseases, flow to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). These life-saving commodities often do not reach those most in need due to poor management of medicines, inadequate distribution systems, and a lack of information about demand at the lower levels of the health system.

Malawi reflects many of these challenges. The country faces a growing burden of disease, largely driven by a high prevalence of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Over 60,000 children die annually. The vast majority of these deaths are due to preventable or treatable causes such as malaria, pneumonia, and diarrhea. Rural health centers in Malawi face limitations in their ability to support local communities. Many centers suffer from frequent shortages of medicines and other supplies, largely attributable to poor supply chain performance. Malawi also faces significant shortages in health personnel, particularly for pharmaceutical staff: an estimated 75% of pharmacy technician positions in the country are currently vacant, leaving health workers to manage pharmacies and logistics duties.

The three-year Malawi program has been designed to improve health system capacity through increasing the human resources needed to improve supply chain performance and medicines management in rural communities. The program will build systems needed to support improved medicines management by addressing three key elements: training and deploying pharmacy staff; increasing supply chain capacity; and improving data management and reporting of logistics data. During the course of the program, 150 pharmacy assistants will be trained and deployed in rural health facilities serving a population of approximately 4.5 million. This represents the start of reaching the Ministry of Health goal of training 650 Pharmacy Assistants to support primary health care in Malawi.

“We have 640 health centers in the country with no trained pharmacy staff to handle issues of drugs and medical supplies management, which has consequences for community health and wellbeing,” said Mr. Godfrey Kadewele, Deputy Director, Pharmaceutical Services at the Ministry of Health. “Improving the supply and management of medicines at the health center level through the training and deploying of Pharmacy Assistants is part of our Health Sector Strategic Plan. I cannot overemphasize the need for this program, and the Ministry of Health is thrilled to see additional investment in this area.”

In remote communities in sub-Saharan Africa, thousands of children die every year from common, treatable illnesses. “One of the biggest culprits,” says Heiner Baumann, Barr Foundation Director of Global Programs is the lack of a proper supply chain to ensure medicines are available when and where they are needed most. Through this initiative, rural Malawi will have a growing cadre of well-trained pharmacy assistants with the will, skill, and mandate to order, stock, and dispense critical medicines. Barr is pleased to support this work and expects it will significantly improve health outcomes in rural Malawi.”

“Our work has demonstrated that improvements in supply chain and the strategic deployment of specialized health personnel can provide significant improvements in health system capacity,” said Emily Bancroft, Program Director, Health Systems at VillageReach. “We expect the Malawi Pharmacy and Supply Chain Strengthening Program to provide further evidence of the value of this approach in order to save lives. We are pleased to be supporting the Ministry of Health and the Malawi College of Health Sciences on this critical initiative.”

“Increasing the number of trained personnel in medicines management is critical to strengthening pharmaceutical systems and improving health outcomes. We look forward to providing technical assistance and training to support the Malawi Pharmacy & Supply Chain Strengthening Program,” said Professor Andy Stergachis, Director of the University of Washington Global Medicines Program.

About Barr Foundation

The Barr Foundation is guided by a vision of a vibrant, just, and sustainable world with hopeful futures for children. Its mission is to support gifted leaders and networked organizations working in Boston and beyond to enhance educational and economic opportunities, to achieve environmental sustainability, and to create rich cultural experiences.

The Foundation’s US-based work focuses on providing quality education, mitigating climate change, and enhancing cultural vitality in Massachusetts. Since 2010, Barr has launched a global program to improve the lives of children and families in developing countries. The Barr Global team is building a portfolio of projects that delivers measurable improvements in the interconnected areas of livelihoods, health, environment and education, predominantly in rural areas. Investments are currently focused in sub-Saharan Africa, Haiti, and India.

For more information about the Barr Foundation, visit www.barrfoundation.org.

About the University of Washington Global Medicines Program

The Global Medicines Program, Department of Global Health, University of Washington, seeks to improve the use, safety, quality, risk-benefit profile, cost-effectiveness, and affordability of medicines in low- and middle-income countries through research, education, training and outreach. Visit <http://globalmedicines.org> for more information.

About VillageReach

VillageReach is a non-profit social enterprise that extends the reach of healthcare services by creating dynamic delivery and information monitoring systems. Its mission is to save lives and improve health by increasing access to quality healthcare for remote, underserved communities. See www.villagereach.org.

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