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DNDi Latin America Receives 2013 Carlos Slim Health Award for Innovations in Neglected-Disease Drug Development

[Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Geneva, Switzerland – 15 February 2013] – Today the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) in Latin America received the Carlos Slim Health Award for 10 years of exceptional work and achievements in research and development (R&D) to deliver new treatments for neglected patients in the region. The $100,000 award will be presented at a ceremony in April in Mexico City.

"Without doubt we must celebrate that the jury decided to recognize the work done by DNDi in Latin America in the last 10 years," said Roberto Tapia, Director of the Carlos Slim Health Institute. "We hope this award sets a precedent for boosting further commitments for health innovations in Latin America. It is a call to encourage more actors to come together and increase discovery and development of new health innovations for poor, marginalized, and forgotten people whose health needs continue to be neglected."

The awards were given by the Carlos Slim Health Institute, founded six years ago by internationally renowned entrepreneur Carlos Slim Helú of Mexico. The Institute is a nonprofit organization focused on key health issues affecting the most vulnerable populations of Mexico, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The awards are granted annually in two categories: Life Achievements in Research, and Outstanding Institution. Of 75 nominations from 15 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, DNDi Latin America was selected for the 2013 Outstanding Institution award for its exceptional work in the region on R&D for neglected diseases.

"Receiving the Carlos Slim Health Award is an honor, acknowledging DNDi’s continuous neglected-disease research efforts in the Americas," said Eric Stobbaerts, Executive Director of DNDi Latin America. “Our primary focus is to deliver urgently needed treatments using a model that has proved efficient to fight diseases affecting millions of neglected people.”

Marking its 10th year in 2013, DNDi and its partners have developed and delivered, through an innovative R&D model, six new treatments for neglected diseases since its inception. Two of these life-saving innovations were developed in Latin America: artemisinin + mefloquine (ASMQ) for the treatment of malaria, and a pediatric dosage form of benznidazole for the treatment of children with Chagas disease, the leading parasitic killer in the Americas. Since its launch in 2008, approximately 260,000 ASMQ treatments have been made available to patients by the Brazilian public pharmaceutical manufacturer Farmanguinhos/Fiocruz.

The award will contribute to DNDi’s current efforts to develop new, safer, more effective drugs in Latin America for Chagas disease and leishmaniasis, another deadly and debilitating neglected tropical disease.

The organization was nominated for the award by Dr. Carlos Morel, Director of the Center for Technological Development in Health at the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) in Brazil, and member of the DNDi Latin America Board of Directors.
While some neglected diseases are deadly, others cause and perpetuate poverty, trapping populations and countries in a vicious cycle where people, including children, fall sick and cannot work or learn, maintaining financial and educational problems for those forgotten families. Health is one of the most important requisites for economic and social development and tackling the archaic burdens of neglected tropical diseases should be a priority for international agendas.

Since 2008, the Carlos Slim Health Institute has given the Health Awards to 12 individuals and nonprofit organizations.

“We must celebrate the work done by DNDi in Latin America in the last 10 years, especially since this award was given by an institution from a Latin American country such as Mexico, investing in research on neglected diseases and vulnerable populations of the entire region,” said Stobbaerts.

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About DNDi
The Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) is a not-for-profit research and development (R&D) organization working to deliver new treatments for neglected diseases, in particular sleeping sickness (human African trypanosomiasis), Chagas disease, leishmaniasis, filaria, malaria, and pediatric HIV. DNDi was established in 2003 by Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF), the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (FIOCRUZ) of Brazil, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI), the Ministry of Health of Malaysia, and the Pasteur Institute of France. The Special Programme for Tropical Disease Research (WHO/TDR) serves as permanent observer.

DNDi Latin America is based in Rio de Janeiro and is one of the seven regional offices of the organization in the world. By establishing key alliances and platforms with the public and private sector, DNDi Latin America manages projects for Chagas disease, leishmaniasis, and malaria, and leads communication and awareness activities for neglected patients throughout Latin America.

Since its inception in 2003, DNDi has delivered six new treatments for neglected patients: two fixed-dose antimalarials (ASAQ and ASMQ), nifurtimox-eflornithine combination therapy (NECT) for late-stage sleeping sickness, sodium stibogluconate and paromomycin (SSG&PM) combination therapy for visceral leishmaniasis in Africa, a set of combination therapies for visceral leishmaniasis in Asia, and a pediatric dosage form of benznidazole for Chagas disease.

DNDi has helped establish three clinical research platforms: Leishmaniasis East Africa Platform (LEAP) in Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Uganda; the HAT Platform based in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for sleeping sickness; and the Chagas Clinical Research Platform in Latin America. Strong regional networks such as these help strengthen research and treatment-implementation capacity in neglected disease-endemic countries.

www.dndi.org

About the Carlos Slim Health Institute
The Carlos Slim Health Institute is a nonprofit organization devoted to help solve the main health issues affecting Latin America and Mexico’s most vulnerable population. The institute generates innovative, sustainable and replicable solutions targeted towards improving the health of individuals; establishes alliances with the public, private and social sectors to
implement innovative models and advanced technological solutions, as well as to strengthen human capital; and serves as a catalyst for change in the provision of evidence-based public health services and policies.

The Carlos Slim Health Awards are given to those who dedicate their work to improve the health of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean. The awards are conferred yearly in two categories: for a career in Research, to recognize the professional work of researchers who have contributed, in a noteworthy manner, to the improvement of the population’s health; and to an exceptional Institution, to recognize nonprofit institutions whose work in academic, research or implementation fields has provided innovative alternatives to improve the health of the population.

www.salud.carlosslim.org

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