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DEVELOPING WORLD HEALTH WITH SMALL CHANGE

Emerging from the heart of Scotland is a company which is focused on the treatment and development of new medicines for some of the most devastating tropical diseases on Earth. Taking up residence in Stirling University Innovation Park (SUIP) this week, Developing World Health is doing exactly what it says in its title. It is a Scottish based charity working in partnership with the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (part of Imperial College London), to develop and distribute drugs to school children in Africa to fight the seven most common Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs). These diseases affect over one billion individuals accounting for around 600,000 deaths – many of which are children.

Two thirds of the total population in Africa have two or more NTDs and require regular treatment. NTDs blind, debilitate, deform and maim causing human misery and poverty and if left untreated can cause fatalities. In addition, there is recent evidence to prove the high rate of co-infection between NTDs and HIV/AIDS.

Founded by Scot, Dr Stuart WG Smith, and based on the principle of treating the root of the compounded poverty problem, Developing World Health is making a significant impact already with its campaign to show that it only takes 50p to treat a child against all seven NTDs for an entire year. Their target is to treat 1 million school children, through the **50p Life Change Appeal**, launched by Hollywood Actor and charity ambassador, Brian Cox in December 2010.

From his Central base at the Innovation Park where he has opened his new office this week, Dr Smith, who gained his doctorate in Tropical parasitology, has worked in the pharmaceutical sector for more than 20 years and is using his experience to focus on the NTDs that affect one sixth of the world's population. He noted, "Developing World Health works in partnership with pharmaceutical companies, institutions, hospitals and other organisations throughout the world, to conduct medical research on new cures or treatment approaches for NTDs such as Leishmaniasis and African Sleeping Sickness."

DWH is part of an exciting new partnership with the Consortium for Parasitic Drug Development (CPDD), the world leaders in research and development for tropical parasitic diseases.

Lynn Blaike, Business Development Manager at the Innovation Park has seen many new businesses take up residence at the Innovation Park over the past few months, and although small in their stronghold, have massive development potential worldwide. She noted: "Having such a worthwhile cause within our campus is an honour. The work of Developing World Health is inspirational and I know that the other tenants within the Park and the Research and Development community throughout Scotland and the whole of the UK, will have natural links to this superb addition to our business community here in Stirling."

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR

The Seven most common Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)

Ascariasis (roundworm) – Around 1.2 billion people are infected (mostly children) and causes 60,000 deaths annually.

Hookworm infection – 740 million cases worldwide, it affects most young women of reproductive age and children.

Trichuriasis (whipworm) – affects 800 million people and causes 10,000 deaths annually

Lymphatic filariasis (LF) – (elephantiasis) more than 20% of the world's population is living at risk of being infected.

Onchocerciasis – of the 37 million people infected, 500,000 have visual impairment and 270,000 are blind.

Schistosomiasis – over 200 million people are infected – can lead to bladder cancer and kidney liver and spleen malfunction.

Trachoma – world's leading cause of preventable blindness – 84 million people suffer from active infections and 8 million people are already blind as a result of infection.