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Gates Foundation Grants US\$8M to CHF International for Slum Upgrading Efforts in India and Ghana

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SILVER SPRING, Md., Oct. 23 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Development Program has just awarded CHF International nearly US\$8 million for a program that will create scaleable solutions enabling the urban poor in India and Ghana to have a meaningful voice in the planning and implementation of slum improvement programs.

In many developing countries around the world, insufficient access to basic municipal services has resulted in low quality and inadequate housing, water, sanitation and transportation for the urban poor living in slums, who account for nearly one-third of the world's total urban population.

The Slum Communities Achieving Livable Environments with Urban Partners (SCALE-UP) program was designed with the understanding that effective local intermediaries -- such as nongovernmental organizations, local governments, academic institutions and microfinance institutions -- are needed to bridge the gap between the growing needs of urban slum dwellers and the services provided by municipal governments.

In order to understand the dynamics that have an effect on urban change, over the next three years, the SCALE-UP program will provide direct technical assistance and subgrants to seven local organizations and assist them in targeted upgrading projects in the Indian cities of Pune, Bangalore and Nagpur; and the Ghanaian cities of Accra and Secondi-Takoradi.

In addition to building the capacity of local organizations and enhancing residents' involvement in development efforts that impact them, SCALE-UP will work with local intermediaries to create income-generating opportunities for the poor.

"We are extremely pleased to be among the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's first grantees to address the complexly interrelated issues facing low-income communities living in slum conditions," said CHF International's Senior Vice President Judith A. Hermanson, Ph.D. She added, "Our experience working in very poor urban communities around the world has shown us that there are solutions and CHF looks forward to refining, advancing and building local capacity to implement these solutions under this grant."

CHF's work in India will build on its experience since 2003 working with municipal governments and the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) network of agencies and other partners in the Indian cities of Ahmedabad, Surat and Vadodara to scale up SEWA's slum upgrading activities. To date, the program has reached 110 slums, benefiting 29,224 households, by forming 98 community-based organizations working to improve the physical and social infrastructure.

SCALE-UP will also build upon CHF International's experience assisting the urban poor in Ghana, where 1.9 million people have limited access to credit to build or improve their homes. In 2005, CHF sponsored a conference that moved forward the national dialogue on affordable housing and economic development, in partnership with the Ghanaian government, private sector, civil society and academicians. Recently, CHF and HFC Bank Limited (Ghana)

established Bofo Microfinance Services, Ltd. to enhance access to credit for informal settlement residents in the cities of Accra, Temu and Kumasi. As a result of Bofo, which has an outstanding loan portfolio of US\$1.1 million, low- and moderate-income Ghanaians are increasingly able to pursue enhanced business, shelter and educational opportunities.

CHF International has significant expertise building the technical and organizational capacity of civil society organizations and their governments worldwide, so that they are responsive to local needs and created with community input at every level. CHF works through traditional structures whenever possible, to gain the buy-in of all stakeholders throughout society. Through this process, local organizations are strengthened to provide high quality, expanded services through a customized blend of intensive participatory learning, on-site assistance, and practical application and monitoring.

"We are pleased to fund the SCALE-UP program and count CHF International as one of our partners," said Charles Lyons, director of special initiatives, Global Development Program at the Gates Foundation. "There is a great need to help solve the problems facing the urban poor, and this grant will help determine how community-based organizations and local governments, in collaboration with academic institutions, can come together to improve the situation of the urban poor."

The foundation's grant to CHF International is part of the Special Initiatives portfolio of its Global Development Program. Special Initiatives grants allow the foundation to fund compelling, specific opportunities to advance development, and to learn about new approaches that can inform and improve the strategies and grantmaking of the Global Development Program. As a part of this grant, CHF will work with two leading knowledge institutions - **the Tata Institute for Social Science in India** and the Ashesi University in Ghana -- to share knowledge and lessons learned with the larger urban development sector.

Founded in 1952, CHF International's mission is to be a catalyst for long-lasting positive change in low- and moderate-income communities around the world, helping them to improve their social, economic and environmental conditions. The organization provides technical expertise and leadership in international development, including critical emergency management following disasters and civil conflict. CHF International has worked in over 100 countries worldwide since its inception. Visit <http://www.chfinternational.org/> for more information about the organization.

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people -- especially those with the fewest resources -- have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, the foundation is led by CEO Patty Stonesifer and co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

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