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The Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development (AIGHD) and Sabin Vaccine Institute Product Development Partnership (Sabin PDP) have recently formed a new research and innovation partnership with the Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises (ABLE) of India on vaccine development for hookworm and other neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). The European Union, through its EuropeAid program, recently awarded a five-year grant of â‚¬333,000 to AIGHD to establish this EU-India partnership.

This new initiative announced on October 14, 2015, aims to build a network of partners who can provide low-cost vaccine manufacturing for hookworm infection and, at a later stage, other NTDs. In particular, the partnership will identify viable paths toward manufacturing a human hookworm vaccine that costs less than US$1 per dose. It will also work to advance the acceptance and introduction of these vaccines in India and other endemic countries. Other partners include FlandersBio and Q-Biologicals in Belgium, and Baylor College of Medicine in the United States.

"Building on global efforts to develop a hookworm vaccine, this partnership will allow the EU biotech industry to share expertise with Indian vaccine manufacturers, which have proven abilities in bringing safe, effective and low-cost vaccines, such as ROTAVAC, to market," said Dr Remko van Leeuwen, project director for the HOOKVAC Consortium at the Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development. "India, in particular, accounts for 35 percent of the global burden of

NTDs. Given their high burden and successful vaccine manufacturing track record, we see strong potential for producing a hookworm vaccine with partners in India."

Approximately 477 million people worldwide suffer from hookworm, making it one of the most pervasive NTDs affecting people living in extreme poverty. Left untreated, hookworm causes internal blood loss leading to iron-deficiency anemia and protein malnutrition, particularly in pregnant women and children. Chronic hookworm infection in children contributes to physical and intellectual impairment, and poor school performance.

"ABLE is proud to join the European Commission in their efforts to fight hookworm infection and other diseases of poverty," said Dr P M Murali, president of ABLE. "We hope to use this opportunity to exchange knowledge and resources and create an innovative and collaborative environment for the joint development of safe and affordable vaccines.

"The Sabin PDP is thrilled to engage in this new initiative, which promotes greater innovation and collaboration with India," said Dr. Peter Hotez, president of Sabin, director of the Sabin PDP and dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine. "Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to explore new partnerships for the Sabin PDP and build on years of research and development efforts to combat the persistent scourge of NTDs."