

For immediate release, Friday, October 9, 2009

Contacts: Elisa Murray, 206-652-8795, emurray@globalpartnerships.org

Kelsey Moll, 206-788-2022, kmoll@path.org

Gloriana Guillen, 212-952-0181 x14, gguillen@promujer.org

Global Partnerships, PATH and Pro Mujer launch microfinance-health initiative

Partnership to focus on expanding access to sustainable, low-cost health solutions for poor women and their families in Latin America

Seattle/New York — Today, three respected nonprofits in the fields of microfinance and global health announced an initiative to improve healthcare in Latin America by using microfinance to expand access to financially sustainable, affordable and essential health solutions for poor women and their families.

The three partners are Global Partnerships, a Seattle-based nonprofit that supports microfinance and other poverty solutions in Latin America; PATH, a Seattle-based nonprofit that enables communities worldwide to break longstanding cycles of poor health; and Pro Mujer, a women's development and microfinance organization that focuses on poor women in Latin America. During the next year, they'll work together to create and launch a financially sustainable health program for Pro Mujer in Nicaragua, with the goal of creating a model that can be replicated elsewhere.

"Poverty and poor health are inextricably linked, and the solutions are as well," said Rick Beckett, President and CEO of Global Partnerships, which is providing overall leadership for the initiative. "One of the strategic challenges facing the microfinance industry is the need to develop fully sustainable solutions that address multiple facets of poverty. This collaboration with Pro Mujer and PATH allows us to bring together microfinance experience, global health expertise and rigorous economic discipline to advance the field for the benefit of people living in poverty."

The initiative will build on Pro Mujer's strong track record of providing poor women in Latin America with an integrated package of financial services, healthcare, and training to lift themselves and their families out of poverty. Through a systematic assessment process, the initiative intends to make Pro Mujer's health services even stronger, more strategic and viable over the long term.

"We are very excited to join forces with such well-respected organizations to bring affordable and sustainable healthcare to women and their families," said Rosario Pérez, Pro Mujer's Chief Executive Officer. "Pro Mujer has 20 years of experience providing high-quality, low-cost healthcare and preventive health education. Collaborating with Global Partnerships and PATH will enable us to do so with greater focus, higher impact, and lower costs, with the goal of tackling the healthcare problems that contribute most to poverty and pose the greatest danger to women and their children."

The initial phase of the microfinance-health initiative will include an assessment by PATH of disease burden and health priorities that will involve working closely with Pro Mujer's client base in Nicaragua to identify priority health concerns and develop appropriate strategies for addressing them through the services of microcredit institutions. Pro Mujer will test the strategies in a follow-up pilot project. Based on

the lessons learned in the pilot, PATH and Global Partnerships will adapt project materials and methodology into a resource guide for defining an integrated health strategy for microfinance institutions that can be replicated in other markets.

“We will be looking at a range of health solutions—largely preventive and primary care—that are affordable, sustainable, and appropriate to Pro Mujer’s client base and infrastructure,” said Chris Elias, President and CEO of PATH.

A long-term goal of the initiative is to affect the dynamic that links poverty and poor health—particularly in areas such as maternal and child mortality, family planning, cervical cancer, domestic violence, chronic disease and other preventable diseases and conditions.

####

See also a Q&A on the microfinance-health initiative

For more information on each organization:

Global Partnerships: <http://www.globalpartnerships.org>

PATH: <http://www.path.org>

Pro Mujer: <http://www.promujer.org>