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**TO REDUCE MATERNAL AND NEWBORN DEATHS IN GHANA, IHI AND ITS
PARTNERS PLAN TO DEVELOP BETTER SYSTEMS TO CONNECT
PREGNANT WOMEN AND INFANTS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES**

**\$4.9 Million Supplemental Grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Will
Build on Existing Work in Ghana**

Cambridge, MA – October 23, 2012 – The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), an independent not-for-profit organization that works with health care providers and leaders throughout the world to achieve safe and effective health care, announced today the launch of a new initiative to improve referral processes for pregnant women and critically ill newborns in rural Ghana. On top of \$9.3 million in funding awarded in 2007, a \$4.9 million supplemental grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will allow *Project Fives Alive!*, which aims to reduce maternal and child mortality in Ghana, to deepen its work in rural and urban communities.

Project Fives Alive! is a partnership between IHI and the National Catholic Health Service (NCHS) to assist and accelerate the Ghana Health Service's existing efforts to achieve the Fourth Millennium Development Goal – a 66 percent reduction in mortality in children under five years of age by 2015 – through the application of quality improvement methods. The current infant mortality rate in Ghana is estimated at 50 per 1,000 live births. Of these deaths, 40 percent occur in the first month of life. *Project Fives Alive!* works to improve the processes of care for mothers and their infants at all levels of the health system – from regional and district health leaders, to frontline health workers, to patients and communities.

In addition to depending on having safe care at facilities, the survival of mothers and their infants often depends on their ability to reach those facilities in time to get the care they need. The supplemental grant will allow *Project Fives Alive!* to improve the ease with which mothers and infants can move from their communities to the health clinics and hospitals and to improve referral processes between health facilities in Ghana. Apart from treacherous roads, lack of the most basic means of transport, and poor communication between communities and facilities, mothers and their infants face other formidable barriers to reaching health facilities. Deep-seated sociocultural beliefs against seeking care in clinics and hospitals, especially in rural areas, often result in pregnant women reaching care too late in their pregnancy or in their newborns' lives. With the new grant from the Gates Foundation, *Project Fives Alive!* will tackle both attitudinal and logistical barriers to timely care by engaging frontline health workers as well as the communities themselves in finding new solutions to this problem. Using innovative methods, *Project Fives Alive!* seeks to identify, test, and spread rapidly across the country novel strategies for timely movement of mothers and infants.

Simultaneously, *Project Fives Alive!* will collaborate with colleagues in Ethiopia and Nigeria, who are also funded by the Gates Foundation, to think creatively about how to surmount maternal and newborn referral challenges, ensuring that successful strategies from different parts of the continent are readily available for all to use.

“Reducing maternal and child mortality is one of the biggest ongoing challenges facing populations in low- and middle-income nations such as Ghana,” said Sodzi Sodzi-Tetty, MD, Executive Director of *Project Fives Alive!* “In particular, we hope that this new project will tackle some of the hardest challenges to safe maternal and child care. I am very hopeful that *Project Fives Alive!*’s deep engagement with communities in this project, coupled with IHI’s rapid learning methods, will help overcome the barriers to mothers and infants being able to get the care they need, when they need it.”

Project Fives Alive! is currently active in about 25 percent of Ghana’s districts and all 32 hospitals in the NCHS system, and is scheduled to begin spreading to the rest of the country of 24 million people and 168 districts later in 2012.

“Most notable about *Project Fives Alive!* is how this approach has been embraced by all levels of the health system. The results so far in reducing mortality in institutions are very encouraging. Now we want to push that further by taking this approach deep into the community,” said IHI Senior Vice President Pierre Barker, MD, who oversees IHI’s work in low- and middle-income countries. “We are profoundly grateful for the continued support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in this endeavor to advance the aim of global health improvement.”

The work in Ghana builds on innovative health care improvement initiatives that IHI is engaged with throughout the world. In addition to extensive work in the United States, IHI has established partnerships or on-the-ground health system improvement initiatives on six continents: North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

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About IHI:

IHI is a leading innovator in health and health care improvement worldwide. For more than 25 years, we have partnered with an ever-growing community of visionaries, leaders, and front-line practitioners around the globe to spark bold, inventive ways to improve the health of individuals and populations. Together, we build the will for change, seek out innovative models of care, and spread proven best practices. IHI is dedicated to advancing four critical aims: optimize health care delivery systems, drive the Triple Aim for populations, realize person- and family-centered care, and build improvement capability. Learn more at www.IHI.org.

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