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First Lady Laura Bush Visits Project Concern International (PCI) Program in Lusaka, Zambia

San Diego, California—June 29, 2007—The First Lady Laura Bush visited Project Concern International-led programs in Zambia on June 28, part of her week-long Africa tour to visit projects addressing the unprecedented HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa.

Touring various African nations throughout her trip, Mrs. Laura Bush visited US government sponsored-programs that are meeting the health needs of people living with HIV/AIDS; addressing the critical necessities of children orphaned by AIDS; as well as empowering women with financial stability.

Representatives from Project Concern International and local partners were part of an estimated 100 people who welcomed The First Lady upon her afternoon arrival to PCI and partner programs in Lusaka, Zambia.

"It was a really, really wonderful and very moving day. There were a few tears at different times during the day when we heard stories. There was a lot of laughter," said Mrs. Bush while reflecting on her day in Zambia. "I want to thank you for your hospitality."

Along with Zambian First Lady Mrs. Maureen Manawasa, Mrs. Bush visited the Flame Community Center with her daughter, Jenna, where they connected with program recipients while they relayed their personal stories. Women also demonstrated small enterprises begun with the help of the PCI-led *WORTH* program, which trains women in literacy, group savings, peer lending and small business development.

In the Chongwe district, there are currently 5,000 women enrolled in the *WORTH* program. Combined, these women provide care for 11,550 orphans and vulnerable children. The *WORTH* program represents a growing trend to support financial independence for women. As part of the commitment from the government of the United States, President George Bush recently pledged approximately \$55 million for women's empowerment in Africa.

"It has been proven that women who are financially independent and have access to information have a better chance of fighting HIV and AIDS. On the other hand, those who are illiterate and poor are the most vulnerable," Mrs. Bush said.

Mrs. Bush also visited the New Horizons Mobile Health Van, part of the Africa KidSAFE network; a network of grassroots organizations that serve as a leading force in Zambia addressing the street children crisis.

The Mobile Health Van provides services to a highly mobile, hard to reach population desperately in need of health care. These services offer children living on the streets access to treatment for injuries caused by violence, education on sexually transmitted diseases, and

psychosocial counseling. The mobile clinic is part of a three step process – outreach, services and reintegration – to reconnect children with family members or get them back in a home.

Established in 2000 by Project Concern International and a core group of community based groups, Africa KidSAFE meets the most basic needs of children including shelter, food, medical care, counseling, education, skills training, and recreation.

Joining Mrs. Bush on her afternoon tour, Mark O'Donnell, PCI's Vice President for Program Operations, said, "While there continues to be too many tragic stories related to the AIDS epidemic and there is much still to be done, I think Mrs. Bush also saw the beginnings of change and real hope for children, women and their families."

Project Concern International is a San Diego-based health and humanitarian organization dedicated to saving lives and building healthy communities around the world. With over 45 years of experience, Project Concern International reaches more than 3 million people each year in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

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