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ROYAL BANK OF CANADA INVESTS \$300,000 (US) IN DRINKING WATER EDUCATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

COLLEGE STATION, TX, Sep. 17, 2009: The Institute for Public Health and Water Research (IPWR) in partnership with the Texas A & M Health Science Center, the University of East Anglia and the Global Water Partnership-Caribbean, has launched *Water for Life: The Trinidad and Tobago Initiative*. Funded by a three-year renewable grant for USD \$300,000 from the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) Blue Water Project, this initiative will provide an educational intervention to various communities within Trinidad and Tobago.

Led by a local steering committee and in partnership with over twenty (20) private, public and NGOs stakeholders, this initiative aims to build capacity at the community level and will focus on the public health implication of household practices related to conservation, collection, storage and usage of water. The impact of this knowledge significantly addresses health literacy regarding hygiene and sanitation.

"Education is the key," said Dr. Jennie Ward-Robinson, Executive Director of IPWR. "The delivery of safe drinking water to populations in developing countries cannot be accomplished through infrastructure alone. A long-term, sustainable solution requires culturally relevant education which generates a sense of local ownership."

According to Ms. Marilyn Crichlow, Acting General Manager of Water Resources Agency at the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), "this project is seen as complimentary to its outreach programs in which the community is educated regarding technology and the application of safe water management practices." Results from this initiative are expected to help establish safe water management practices at the community and household level in selected rural communities of Trinidad and Tobago that depend heavily on rainwater and truck-borne water supplies.

Approximately 1.1 billion people – 18% of the world's population – lack access to safe drinking water. Diarrhoea and malaria (water-related diseases) are ranked 3rd (17%) and 4th (8%) in the cause of death among children under 5 years of age. More than 2.2 million people, mostly in developing countries, die each year from diseases associated with poor water and unsanitary conditions. Water use increased six-fold during the last century, more than twice the rate of population growth. Approximately 2 billion people were affected by natural disasters in the last decade, 86% of them by floods and droughts.

For additional information about this topic, or to schedule an interview (in Trinidad) with Dr. Fredericka Deare, please call (868-662-2002 Ext 3549/868-389-7395) at Institute of Gender and Development Studies or email gender@sta.uwi.edu. In the USA, with Dr. Jennie Ward-Robinson, please contact Misha Granado at 979-845-0391 or misha.granado@ipwr.org.

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