

For Immediate Release

### **Canada's Micronutrient Initiative Celebrates 5 Billionth Vitamin A Capsule**

Canadian leadership has saved millions of children's lives

November 25, 2008, Olds, Alberta – A Canadian-based international vitamin A supplementation program that has helped save the lives of more than 2 million children over the past 10 years reached a milestone this week, with the production of its five billionth vitamin A capsule. A global organization based in Canada, the Micronutrient Initiative, is responsible for overseeing the vitamin A program which is distributed to help boost the immune systems of children in 70 countries.

An event marking this important milestone was held today in Olds, Alberta at Banner Pharmacaps (Canada) Limited, one of two Canadian vitamin A capsule manufacturers working with the Micronutrient Initiative.

"It only takes two doses of vitamin A every year, from age six months to five years – that's about nine capsules – to help save a child's life," says Venkatesh Mannar, President of the Micronutrient Initiative. "Vitamin A is a simple, cost-effective way to boost children's immune systems so that their bodies can fight off deadly infections, such as measles, and get the best start in life. Each capsule costs only about two cents. The five billionth capsule being manufactured today highlights Canada's commitment to saving children's lives. All Canadians should be very proud of their contribution to child survival."

MI's vitamin A program, supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), is one of Canada's most successful international development stories. Since 1997, the organization has provided more than 75 per cent of the developing world's need for vitamin A and has contributed to saving the lives of an estimated 450,000 to 500,000 children every year. The vitamin A capsules manufactured in Canada are donated primarily to UNICEF, which then distributes them through national child health programs in more than 70 countries around the world.

Vitamin A capsules in Canada have been primarily manufactured by two companies; Accucaps Industries Limited in Windsor, Ontario and Banner Pharmacaps (Canada) Limited in Olds, Alberta. Both companies exemplify the important role the private sector can play in Canada's international development efforts.

"This is a very important milestone, and an opportunity to show Canadians how they are making a difference in the lives of children around the world," said Dr. Aqeel Fatmi, Global Vice President of R&D and Operations, Banner Pharmacaps. "Banner Pharmacaps is proud to be part of this important global initiative."

"Being a part of one of the most successful child health initiatives in the developing nations and knowing that our product is helping in the survival of millions of children is something that we at Accucaps are extremely proud of," said Bruno Biscaro, President of Accucaps Industries Limited. The Micronutrient Initiative is an Ottawa-based, international not-for-profit organization dedicated to ensuring that the world's most vulnerable - especially women and children - in developing countries get the vitamins and minerals they need to survive and thrive, through supplementation and food fortification programs. Its mission is to develop, implement and monitor innovative, cost effective and sustainable solutions for hidden hunger, in partnership with others.

For more information, please visit [www.micronutrient.org](http://www.micronutrient.org).

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**Visuals available:**

Stills of children receiving vitamin A supplementation  
Footage of vitamin A supplementation distribution in Nepal, Bangladesh and Tanzania (UNICEF  
footage)  
Stills of vitamin A capsules

Interviews available in English and French