





**S1 Fig. Effect of solvents on formazan recovery.** *E. coli* GC4468 strain was grown to mid-log phase in LB medium, the cells were thoroughly washed and resuspended to  $OD_{600} = 0.1$  in PBS + glucose, M9CA, or LB medium. The MTT assay was performed and formazan crystals were dissolved in SDS-HCl, SDS-phosphate (pH 7.4), DMSO, ammonia-DMSO, SDS-DMSO, isopropanol or SDS-isopropanol. **Panel A:** Absorbance at formazan peak; **Panel B:** Non-specific absorbance away from the peak; **Panel C:** Wells of a 96-well plate showing undissolved formazan; **Panel D:** Formazan amount presented as a difference between the absorbance at the peak and background absorbance resulting from turbidity and undissolved formazan; **Panel E:** Absorption spectrum obtained when MTT assay was performed for *E. coli* in LB medium and formazan was solubilized with DMSO; **Panel F:** Absorption spectrum of formazan formed by *E. coli* in PBS-glucose, dissolved with ammonia-DMSO; **Panel G:** Absorption spectrum of formazan formed by *E. coli* in LB medium, dissolved with ammonia-DMSO. Experiments were repeated twice, each sample in triplicates. Bars show mean  $\pm$  S.D.