

## NEWS NOTE

### **Bolivian and Canadian governments sign cooperation agreement to carry out "Malnutrition Zero" programme**

*President Morales highlights "one of the main aims of my government is to ensure that Bolivian children are fully fed"*

*La Paz, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2008.* On Tuesday, the Government of Canada granted Bolivia 16.3 million Canadian dollars for the Malnutrition Zero programme. Canadian Ambassador to Bolivia Geneviève des Rivières and the Bolivian Minister of Development Planning, Graciela Toro, and Minister of Health, Walter Selum Rivero, signed the financing agreement in an act held in the Mirror Hall at the Burned Palace; President Evo Morales was also present.

At the start of his speech, President Morales told the audience, "My father used to say that we children would be fine with second-hand clothes, but not with empty bellies." He stated that one of the main objectives of his government was "To ensure that Bolivian children are fully fed; what good is it to be vaccinated if we are not fed well." He pointed out that the commitment made by Canadian Cooperation was in line with the National Development Plan, as well as that of several municipal governments to prioritising feeding and nutrition, mainly through actions related to school breakfasts. "We must make cooperation transparent; especially that which goes to our neighbourhoods and peasant farmers."

Canadian Ambassador Geneviève des Rivières mentioned that the number one problem in Bolivian public health was that of malnutrition and supported her government's position to "support Bolivia in the total eradication of malnutrition among children aged 6 to 23 months." She highlighted the need to work together with parents and teachers in order to raise their awareness of the basic need to feed their children better. She thanked UNICEF and the Micronutrients Initiative for their commitment to working directly with the aims of the Malnutrition Zero programme and those of Canadian Cooperation.

The funds from the agreement signed today will be invested in Bolivian government institutions, international cooperation and NGOs as follows: 5 million to the Ministry of Health and Sport, 5 million to UNICEF actions, 5.5 million to the Canadian NGO Micronutrients Initiative and 800 thousand to monitoring and evaluation to be carried out by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

In Bolivia, one out of three children under five years of age are not fed enough: they lose nutrients through respiratory or gastrointestinal infections which in turn impedes their psychomotor development and life potential.

#### **Malnutrition Zero programme**

The Malnutrition Zero programme is the Bolivian government's main social policy. It aims at ensuring optimum growth and development for children as a way of making progress towards sustainable socio-economic stability and poverty reduction. This means placing infants under 24 months as a top priority, and improving practices regarding their care, feeding and nutrition.

This financial support from the Canadian government is important because it will help to support the efforts made by the Government of Bolivia to reach the Millennium Development Goals by eradicating malnutrition in children under two years of age, and reducing malnutrition and micro-nutrient deficiencies in children under five and pregnant or breastfeeding mothers in the most vulnerable areas of Bolivia.

In this way, families, communities, municipalities and institutions will be better prepared to provide integrated care and feeding to children under five, and pregnant or lactating women.

The programme is being carried out in 52 -vulnerability municipalities that are highly vulnerable to food insecurity and which have been given priority by the government. The total population covered is 665,636 inhabitants, of which 20,523 are pregnant women and 103,384 are children aged five or under.

Phase one focuses efforts on Bolivia's 22 most vulnerable municipalities in terms of food insecurity, eight of which are located in Chuquisaca, five in Cochabamba and nine in Potosí. The second phase will gradually expand its interventions into the remaining prioritised municipalities.

### **UNICEF's commitments to the Malnutrition Zero programme**

UNICEF participates in the Malnutrition Zero programme through strategies to promote better practices in nutrition, hygiene, sanitation and solid waste disposal for families, communities, children and schools. It also seeks to diminish the occurrence of illnesses that are related to malnutrition by supporting 52 Integral Nutrition Units (UNIs), 16 "Child and Mother-friendly Hospitals" and by improving the use of basic services: e.g. the operation and maintenance of water and sanitation systems, and strengthening potable water and sanitation committees (CAPyS) to better manage basic services projects.

#### **About UNICEF**

*UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.*

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