

## PRESS RELEASE

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#### **HELPING UNICEF HELP CHILDREN IN GANSU PROVINCE Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF Ambassador Karen Mok gives Beijing Press Conference on return from her week-long Gansu Field Trip**

BEIJING, 27 January 2007 – "With so many poor families in the province, I was able to see for myself how children very desperately need the basic healthcare UNICEF is providing, so as to have that all-important chance to develop their fullest potentials", Karen Mok told the UNICEF Press Conference organized this morning at the Courtyard Hotel of Marriott, Beijing.

Gansu, in China's North-West, is one of the very poorest of China's provinces with maternal mortality rates nearly twice the national average and only just over 80% of children completing the fifth grade of primary education. While agriculture remains the province's economic mainstay, soils are poor and degraded and agricultural productivity levels some of the lowest in all China.

Liang Liang (not his real name) is six years old. He lost his mother six years ago when she gave birth to him. Liang Liang's mother had only once medical check-up during pregnancy and gave birth at home. She had serious breathing problems after delivery and after one hour, she died. Liang Liang's father travels to another province to earn a living and his grandparents brought up Liang Liang. Karen was touched by Liang Liang's story. As a woman, she thinks every mother hopes to take care of her own baby. To bring laugh to Liang Liang, Karen brought toys to him and encouraged the grandparents to be strong. Liang Liang will be a good boy in future. Karen would like to stress the message that all pregnant women need to have medical check-ups and to give birth in medical facilities and not at home.

Xiao Lin (not his real name)'s (8 years old) mother had her baby delivered at home by the village doctor and Xiao Lin had breathing problems and high fever afterwards. But his mother did not take him to hospital. Since then he has been mentally and physically paralyzed and incontinent. He cannot talk and cannot walk. For 8 years, his parents have been taking good care of him. Karen had tears in her eyes when she saw Wei and was impressed by the strong mind of his mother when she told Karen that she will not give up Wei. Karen hopes to spread the UNICEF message that all deliveries need to take place in hospitals by medically trained staff. UNICEF Representative to China Dr. Yin Yin Nwe spoke of the importance of the work of UNICEF's Hong Kong Committee, with its galaxy of top celebrities who have frequently attended UNICEF advocacy and fundraising events on the Mainland.

"One of UNICEF's greatest comparative advantages in the UN system are our UNICEF committees in 37 countries and territories", she said. "To see why, you only have to look around at today's event: a top Hong Kong star, a premium private sector Chow Tai Fook Jewellery Co., Ltd., which has generously donated HK\$ 1 million to UNICEF and, together with our Hong Kong Committee, all with this same shared commitment to our projects here in China. And then there are you, the media, with the magic to be able to tell tens of millions about today's event and thereby inspire others to join our cause. Thank you all for being here today!"

Karen Mok was appointed as "UNICEF Ambassador for Poverty Alleviation" in 2004 and since May 2005 has been a full Ambassador for the Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF, which in 2006 raised over USD one million for the China Children's Health Fund, which supports UNICEF projects on the Mainland.

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The field visit by Karen Mok to Gansu province from 19-26 January 2007 was made with a film crew from TVB-Hong Kong which is to use the footage to produce a TV special to raise funds for UNICEF's "China Children's Health Fund Monthly Donation Programme".

The field trip, mainly sponsored by Chow Tai Fook Jewellery Co., Ltd., was jointly organized by UNICEF and its programme counterparts of the Government of China including the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Health, which were both present at the press conference.

### About UNICEF

The suffering of children in the Second World War prompted the founding of UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund. The United Nations General Assembly set up UNICEF in 1946 to ensure children's rights in survival, development, protection and participation.

UNICEF is the first international organisation established solely to safeguard the rights of children. We believe that nurturing and caring for children are the cornerstones of human progress. We work with other UN agencies, governments and NGOs to overcome the obstacles that block the pathway in a child's life. These obstacles include violence, disease, poverty and discrimination.

UNICEF was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965 for our efforts and contributions to children worldwide.

Over 86% of UNICEF'S staff work in the field and more than 90% of donations are spent on UNICEF's field programmes. UNICEF receives no funding from the United Nations, and depends entirely on voluntary contributions for all our work.

### Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF

The Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF (HKCU) was founded in 1986 and is one of the 37 National Committees. The main works of the Committee are to organize fundraising and advocacy programmes in order to finance and assist in UNICEF's projects implemented in 156 developing countries currently.

The HKCU also organizes various programmes to arouse public awareness towards the situation of children in developing countries and children's rights. We have different programmes to encourage youth participation in voluntary service and pay attention to world issues.

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