

MEDIA RELEASE

UNICEF needs \$7.7m for life-saving children's programmes in Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, 10 July 2006 - UNICEF Ethiopia urgently needs more than US\$7.7 million to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of the country's most vulnerable children during the second half of this year.

The money will fund The Enhanced Outreach Strategy (EOS) programme – a ground-breaking project which reaches 7 million children twice every year with a life-saving package of interventions including Vitamin A supplementation, measles vaccination, malaria net distribution, de-worming and nutritional screening together with referral to supplementary feeding programmes.

The EOS, the largest ever partnership between UNICEF, WFP and the Ethiopian Government, takes place twice a year in every region of the country.

A total of 1.6 million pregnant and lactating women are also screened for malnutrition and, where appropriate, referred to therapeutic feeding programmes.

However if the funding does not come through in time, UNICEF will have to cancel the second round of the EOS for 2006, leaving children vulnerable to severe acute malnutrition and a range of life-threatening diseases across Ethiopia.

"It is crucial that we get this funding – and quickly," said Bjorn Ljungqvist, UNICEF's country representative in Ethiopia.

"The Enhanced Outreach Strategy has already saved tens of thousands of young lives in Ethiopia. It is one of the real success stories of health sector development in Ethiopia. We need to make sure that this success story keeps going."

UNICEF urgently needs US\$3.4 million to cover the costs of the EOS in ten regions. It needs another US\$3.3 million to pay for drugs and therapeutic foods designed to treat children with severe acute malnutrition.

These therapeutic foods include 660 tons or US\$2.4 million of Plumpy'Nut – a super-charged peanut butter that has been proved to have a dramatically beneficial impact on even the most acutely malnourished children.

The remaining money is needed for coordination, monitoring and indirect programme support costs.

In total, UNICEF needs to raise US\$34.6 million to meet the costs of all of its emergency programmes in Ethiopia this year – covering everything from vital water supplies to measles campaigns and supplementary feeding for malnourished children. It has so far received generous donations from everyone from individuals to the governments of Turkey, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, the UK and the USA.

But it is still more than 60%, or \$21 million short of its overall target.

The second block of this year's EOS is due to kick off in Afar, Gambella and Somali region in September. There are plans to reach vulnerable children in the rest of the country in October.

It is estimated that more than 150,000 Ethiopian children aged under-five suffer from the life-threatening condition of severe acute malnutrition every year.

The EOS/TSF is designed to act as a bridge towards a long-term reformation of the country's health care system under the Ethiopian Government's Health Sector Development Programme (HSDP).

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