

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Ethiopia: Child Survival Gains Threatened by Malnutrition

*An estimated 126,000 need immediate help – funding shortfall cited*

ADDIS ABABA, 20 May 2008 - An estimated 126,000 children are in need of urgent therapeutic care for severe malnutrition. UNICEF Ethiopia today cautioned that up to 6 million children under-5 years of age are living in impoverished, drought prone districts and require continuation of urgent preventive health and nutrition interventions.

The situation is the worst since the major humanitarian crisis of 2003, and is rapidly deteriorating. 50 million USD urgently required for Health, Nutrition and Water/Sanitation.

"It is extremely unfortunate that the combined effects of drought, food price hikes, and insufficient resources for preventive measures, resulted in an emergency that jeopardizes significant child survival gains in Ethiopia. The mechanisms and capacity to prevent and respond to the increase of severe acute malnutrition are in place but are under resourced," said Bjorn Ljungqvist, UNICEF representative in Ethiopia.

Widespread drought, poor rainy seasons, heavy loss of livestock, limited food supply and soaring prices of food, fuel and fertilizer linked to the global food crisis are contributing to the troubled outlook for children in Ethiopia. For example, since September 2007, the costs of some cereals have increased between 50 per cent and 90 per cent, stretching the ability of some households to buy and meet all their food needs.

Pastoral areas and farming communities dependent on the failed short rains in the South and Southeastern parts of Ethiopia have been the most critically affected: Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), Oromiya, and Somali. Other hotspots are developing in Amhara, Afar and Tigray regions. In addition to the 8 million Ethiopians who are chronically food insecure and are supported by a national safety net programme, at least 3.4 million Ethiopians are in need of emergency food relief – a figure that is likely to rise.

The number of children admitted to therapeutic feeding centers is increasing, putting a strain on the local to respond and on the availability of specialized food for treatment of severely malnourished children.

UNICEF is providing therapeutic feeding to children severely malnourished through ready to use therapeutic foods such as Plumpy Nut. Over the weekend, UNICEF received 90 metric tones. However, as much as 1,800 tones are needed over the next three months.

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There is a dire need for additional funding for increased therapeutic supplies. UNICEF has asked for \$20 million for emergency nutrition alone. It has received only 5 per cent - \$1 million. The additional 30 million are required for measles vaccination, control of diarrheal diseases, outreach health/nutrition activities, emergency water trucking and sanitation.

UNICEF is also concerned about the wider-impact of this crisis on families and the risk of an increase in child labour and school dropouts.

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Attention Broadcasters: Broadcast quality VNS on the Ethiopian food crisis is available at [thenewsmarket.com/unicef](http://thenewsmarket.com/unicef)

### 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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