

MEDIA RELEASE

DREAM TEAMS RACE TO RAISE FUNDS FOR ETHIOPIAN ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

ADDIS ABABA, 29 November –379 Dream Team members who pledged to raise funds and lobby for Ethiopia’s orphans and vulnerable children through their participation in the 2005 Toyota Great Ethiopian Run raised more than \$18,000 in Sunday’s ‘Run For Their Dreams’ campaign, The Great Ethiopia Run’s first ever sponsorship campaign.

‘Run For Their Dreams’ launched the fundraising phase of the Campaign for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, organized by the National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Task Force, an umbrella organization chaired by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs that includes UNICEF, the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (HAPCO), UNAIDS, USAID, Save the Children, among other NGOs and government departments.

“Our dream is to see an Ethiopia fit for children,” said Bjorn Ljungqvist, UNICEF Representative in Ethiopia. “Our dream is to see an Ethiopia where all children go to school, an Ethiopia where all children can go to sleep well fed, an Ethiopia where all children are healthy, an Ethiopia where no children are infected by HIV, an Ethiopia where nobody is going to hit any children – where children can play, sing and run free.”

There are an estimated 4.6 million orphans in Ethiopia, a population which continues to grow as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Extended family networks, which traditionally absorbed orphans, are being strained to the point where they can no longer cope. The tragic result is a burgeoning population of street children in urban centers and increasing numbers of child-headed households.

It costs 2,400 Birr (US\$275) to provide one child with rent, food, clothes, hygiene and medical services for a year, or 2,940 Birr (US\$337) if you include education.

“We applaud the Dream Teams who seized the opportunity to contribute to the cause of orphans and vulnerable children by raising sponsorship through this race,” said Ljungqvist. “We must continue to kindle this spirit and action to ensure that our dreams for a better Ethiopia are realized.”

Dream team members included private individuals and staff members from MOLSA, HAPCO, Ethiopian Airlines, USAID, Sheraton Addis, Toyota, World Vision, Pathfinder, Forum for Street Children, Population Services International (PSI); the Swedish Ambassador, the Norwegian Ambassador and staff from the Tanzanian, Israeli, South African, Turkish, Bulgarian and Venezuelan embassies; UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNDP, ECA, WFP, IOM and UNICEF.

“This is my third year running but this time it is unique because we are doing it for a dream,” said Daniel Teodros, a Sheraton Addis employee and member of the Sheraton Addis Dream Team. “The dream is for children – the vulnerable children of Ethiopia, especially those affected by HIV.”

Dream Team members were joined by 2000 members of youth anti-AIDS clubs from all regions of Ethiopia who had traveled to Addis Ababa for weekend of activities culminating in their participation in the UNICEF 10 K youth challenge.

“Participating in sports is very important for young people, said Ferew Zenebe, 18-year-old winner of the UNICEF youth challenge in the 15-24 year male category. “Young people should stay away from unhealthy places and protect themselves from HIV/AIDS. By participating in sports they are taking care of themselves. Sports will help them succeed in whatever they do. They will be healthy. It will also be a great lesson for the rest of society and help to develop the field of sports in the country and help in transforming Ethiopia.”

‘Run For Their Dreams’ follows on the heels of ‘Hear Their Dreams’, a national consultation with Ethiopia’s children, where young people across Ethiopia were invited to describe their dreams and ambitions through painting, prose and poetry culminating in the publication of a new campaigning book titled ‘We Have a Dream’.

The third part of the campaign, “Fulfill their Dreams” aims to persuade Ethiopian politicians to raise national support and funding for orphans and vulnerable children. Parliamentarians will be asked to increase budget support for vulnerable children through all state avenues, including the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Candidates in next year’s woreda elections will be asked to sign up to a list of commitments on children’s rights, based on the findings of the ‘We Have A Dream’ book.

The Dream Campaign aims to establish a permanent Alliance For Orphans and Vulnerable Children, made up of government bodies, UN agencies, NGOs, religious organizations, civil society groups and interested members of the public.

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