

PRESS RELEASE

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ENHANCED OUTREACH STRATEGY FOR CHILD SURVIVAL SUCCESSFULLY TARGETS CHILDREN AND MOTHERS

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia – The United Nations Children’s Fund, UNICEF, and the World Food Programme, WFP announced today that they are undertaking the Enhanced Outreach Strategy (EOS) of the Child Survival Programme to benefit 6 million children in 7 regions of Ethiopia.

The EOS is a three-year UNICEF project funded by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and complemented by WFP with specific aims of reducing the mortality rate of mothers and children and increasing access to health care for the target group and provide supplementary food.

Currently, the EOS is being implemented by the Health Bureau and DPPB of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR). It is meant as a transition strategy to the Government’s Health Extension Package (HEP), which is an element of the Food Security Strategy. The target population in SNNPR is over 1.4 million children under 5 in the 54 most food insecure *woredas* (districts) spread over 11 zones of the region. The three-year project will later be expanded to Tigray, Oromia, Dire Dawa, Harar, Amhara and Somali regions

“The EOS activities are ensuring that mothers and children receive the basic preventive health care that is their fundamental human right,” said Bjorn Ljungqvist, Representative of UNICEF in Ethiopia, who recently visited several remote EOS sites in the Hamar region of SNNPR. “By taking health care to the village level, working with community volunteers, we ensure that every mother and child gets the care they are entitled to, ensuring that preventable diseases are treated before they become more serious and endanger children’s survival.”

The first round of EOS/ Child Survival activities have been completed in 54 *woredas* of SNNPR with a total population of over nine million people. Over 1.3 million children were screened (91.2 per cent of target), of which 6.7 per cent (over 75,000) were malnourished and referred to WFP/DPPB (Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau) for supplementary feeding over the next six months.

“The causes are incredibly complex but WFP has to help find practical solutions to malnutrition of children and women,” said Georgia Shaver, WFP Representative and Country Director. “WFP’s activities in this joint effort are not limited to targeted supplementary feeding but also promotion of key messages on nutrition.”

As part of its Emergency Operation, WFP’s role in this programme is complementing and strengthening UNICEF’s Child Survival Programme with a comprehensive supplementary food component linking supplementary feeding with Mother and Child Health (MCH) activities at community level. WFP, in coordination with DPPB, and Bureaux of Health also conducts training of trainers for *woreda* and zonal government staff on food handling. These, in turn train locally selected women food distribution agents and key *kebele* (sub-district) leaders. This method not only increases community participation at grassroots level but also enables women to be at the forefront of food distributions and future plans.

In SNNPR, over 1 million children received Vitamin A supplementation (99.9 per cent of target). Some 850,000 children between 1-5 years received de-worming tablets (70 per cent of target); Over 135,000 children under one year of age (who were too young during previous campaigns) were vaccinated against measles. Nearly 160,000 pregnant and lactating mothers were screened and 21 per cent of them (over 33,000) were found to be eligible for supplementary feeding and referred to WFP/DPPB.

The EOS activities will be repeated every six months in the same woredas over the next three years. With joint support of UNICEF, WFP, Regional Health Bureaux and DPPBs support, six more regions are going to adopt the EOS strategy in the coming months targeting over 6 million children in 325 affected woredas.

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