

MEDIA RELEASE

ETHIOPIANS URGED TO JOIN LARGEST EVER CAMPAIGN FOR ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

ADDIS ABABA, 25 October 2005 – Ethiopians were today urged to put on their running shoes and join the largest ever campaign for their country's orphans and vulnerable children.

Individuals and groups – everyone from Anti-Aids youth club members to religious leaders – are being invited to take part in the Great Ethiopian Run and raise sponsorship money for Ethiopia's most disadvantaged young people.

The 'Run For Their Dreams' campaign, organised by UNICEF and the National Task Force on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, will be the Great Ethiopian Run's first official sponsorship campaign.

It will also form part of Ethiopia's contribution to a worldwide push to raise the profile of vulnerable children, particularly in relation to HIV/AIDS. Today's Ethiopian launch coincides with the unveiling of UNICEF and UNAIDS' global campaign 'Unite For Children: Unite Against Aids', designed to alert the world to the fact that children are missing from the global AIDS agenda. (More details are available in this pack.)

Money raised through the Great Ethiopian Run will go to a range of groups working with Ethiopia's vulnerable children - including more than 4.6 million orphans, many of whom are struggling to survive on the streets with HIV/AIDS and other conditions.

"It is easy to stand and look at the problem from a distance and wring our hands at how big and impossible the problem is," said Bjorn Ljungqvist, UNICEF's Country Representative in Ethiopia.

"But the only real way to confront it is to get involved. This campaign offers a chance for every one of us who care about the future of our children to make a contribution to ensure that orphans and other vulnerable children get the support, the love, the protection and the resources they need to fulfill their dreams just like every other Ethiopian child."

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. Runners have been asked to raise at least 200 Birr.

'Run For Their Dreams' is just one of a string of events organized by UNICEF and the National Task Force that will focus on vulnerable children over the next few months and contribute to the global 'Unite For Children: Unite Against Aids' campaign.

'Hear Their Dreams', is a ground-breaking national consultation with Ethiopia's children. Young people across Ethiopia are being invited to describe their dreams and ambitions through painting, prose and poetry. Their work will be displayed in exhibitions nationally and published in a book.

Under "Fulfilling their Dreams" campaign staff will draw up a 'Call To Action' document for Ethiopia's vulnerable children, partly based on the issues raised in the 'Hear Their Dreams' part of the process. Election candidates will be asked to sign up to the 'Call To Action' before the poll. Afterwards, campaign staff will follow up to make sure candidates live up to their promises.

Ethiopia has one of the largest populations of orphans and vulnerable children in the world. Orphanhood exposes young people to huge challenges including abuse and neglect, poor schooling, adolescent sex work, unpaid child labour and HIV/Aids.

NOTE TO EDITORS

The Great Ethiopian Run is Africa's largest 10k road race. More than 25,000 runners are expected to set off from the centre of Addis Ababa on Sunday November 27, 2005.

Regular registration for the Great Ethiopian Run has now ended. The only way for people to take part now is to sign up for the 'Running For Their Dreams' campaign. After signing up, they will become an official 'Dream Team' member, wear special insignia on the run and commit to raising money and support for vulnerable children.

Anyone wanting to sign up with the Dream Team can call 011 544 4178 for more details.

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