

PRESS RELEASE

20 October 2004

TALKING POINTS FOR UNICEF REPRESENTATIVE BJORN LJUNGQVIST 2004 Sub National Immunisation Days (SNIDs)

- The Ethiopian Government has exhibited strong national commitment towards eradicating polio in the country. Ethiopia has conducted supplemental immunisation campaigns since 1996.
- No case of wild poliovirus has been isolated since January 2001. Efforts are under way to attain certification criteria targets in order to achieve polio free status.
- This achievement could not have been reached without the existing strong partnership between the Ministry of Health (MOH), Centres for Disease Control (CDC), Rotary International, and USAID, WHO, UNICEF, the Government of Japan and other partners.
- Ethiopia is no longer on the list of priority countries. However, there is the threat of importing wild poliovirus from countries still harbouring the virus. (There is a high risk for poliovirus importation in Ethiopia now due to intense transmission in Nigeria and the recent transmission of poliovirus to Sudan which borders Ethiopia.)
- To maintain its polio free status, Ethiopia must have a strong importation plan and cross border social mobilisation activities to promptly detect importation of wild poliovirus and effectively implement outbreak response activities.
- UNICEF has been supporting the Government of Ethiopia in securing Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) and providing technical assistance and funds for operational costs.
- SNIDs are not only for polio eradication, but also to strengthen health care delivery and routine vaccination, while improving services and the skills of health personnel. Vitamin A is administered as well as measles and tetanus immunization.
- SNIDs serve as a reminder of every Ethiopian's right to health and survival. These rights must be secured by all, including policy makers, religious leaders, the private sector, the media and communities.
- Adequate human, material, and financial resources must be made available to guarantee polio eradication and consolidate gains made to build an effective routine EPI program.
- We must finish what we started and reach our goal of a polio free world. Together we will win the fight against polio. I wish you success in your stay these two days.