

PRESS RELEASE

SPEECH BY UNICEF NUTRITION OFFICER SYLVIE CHAMOIS EMERGENCY NUTRITION INTERVENTION GUIDELINES CONSENSUS BUILDING WORKSHOP 29 MARCH 2004

His Excellency, Head of the Early Warning Department, Teshome Erkneh,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

NAZARETH, Ethiopia -- One of the most visible manifestations of the impact of drought can be measured through the nutritional status of the population, specifically the nutritional status of those most vulnerable -- children under five years of age.

Over 85 per cent of Ethiopia's population relies on subsistence farming or pastoralism in an environment where rains are erratic, leading to cyclical patterns of malnutrition affecting the country's children and increasing the demand for food aid.

Children's nutritional status depends on three necessary components:

- Number one is food security or the ability of a child's family to produce and/or access adequate nutritious food.
- Secondly, access to adequate health care, both preventative and curative, a clean water supply and sanitation facilities are critical for a healthy living environment. A low standard of health care and repetitive intervals of illness, such as diarrhoeal disease, contribute to increased malnutrition in children and the decreasing capacity of their families to produce food and income generating activities.
- Finally, adequate feeding practices, such as exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of life, active feeding of infants, adequate hygiene practices relating to food preparation and personal hygiene are essential. Inadequate practices reduce the ability of families to safely prepare food and increase their vulnerability to malnutrition and diarrhoeal diseases.

That is why the development of the current "Emergency Nutrition Intervention Guidelines" is such a significant step. These guidelines will attempt to prevent malnutrition in a multi-sectoral way. We have come together at this workshop to further review the guidelines and ensure that all components of the response are sufficiently developed. Our efforts will provide a healthier future for Ethiopia's children.

I wish us all a productive, successful workshop. Thank you.