

## STATEMENT BY BRUNO MAES, UNICEF ETHIOPIA OFFICER-IN-CHARGE, AT THE COMMEMORATION OF WORLD HEALTH DAY, 7 APRIL 2005

H.E. Dr. Kebede Tadesse, Minister of Health of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Dr. Olusegun Babaniyi, WHO Country Representative

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor and a privilege to be able to address you here today as we commemorate World Health Day.

The slogan for this year's celebration, "Make Every Mother and Child Count," could not have been better coined to illustrate the challenges faced by the health sector in Ethiopia.

It is also fitting reflection of the spirit and vision that is guiding health sector reform in Ethiopia, in particular the Health Extension Services Programme that was launched last year as a major development in the strategy being followed to achieve universal primary health care – making sure that every mother and every child is indeed accounted for.

Engaging the beneficiaries of the health care system, the communities and families, and empowering them to make meaningful contributions to the process of primary health care delivery at the village level has already demonstrated remarkable results.

Six months ago, primary health care coverage in Amhara Region, one of the most populous regions in Ethiopia with rural populations living scattered over vast and mountainous terrain, serviced by limited infrastructure, was estimated at 47 per cent. Today that figure has risen to 52 per cent. In six months primary health care coverage has risen by five percentage points – this is a remarkable achievement. By engaging the community to build the rural health posts and training health extension agents and placing them in these posts in the rural villages, the goal of providing primary health care, a fundamental human right that should be enjoyed by all, especially every mother and every child, is being achieved.

Your Excellency, allow me to extend, on behalf of UNICEF, my congratulations to the Ministry of Health of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for the promising developments we are witnessing in the efforts to bring primary health care to every child and mother and for the development of the National Strategic Plan of Child Survival and its full integration in the draft third Health Sector Development Plan.

UNICEF is committed to support the Ministry in its implementation through the Health Extension Programme and the Primary Health Care Network. We also support the efforts of the Ministry to link

Child Survival efforts and Maternal Mortality Reduction Initiatives in the coming years and appeal to all donors to join in this effort

In Ethiopia today we once again find ourselves at a crossroads. The decisions that we make today will have profound implications for the future. While we are witnessing the power of the people to affect major changes in their lives, we must also remain cognizant of the formidable challenges that remain, challenges that cannot be surmounted by the rural communities building rural health posts alone.

As all of you are aware, with the recent cross-border transmission of the wild polio virus, Ethiopia faced a major setback in the fight to eradicate polio. The re-emergence of polio in Ethiopia following four years without incidence, is a vivid reminder of the need to remain ever vigilant and the enduring need to maintain the partnerships that have been developed between the Ministry and regional bureaus of health, donors, and organizations like our sister agency the World Health Organization and UNICEF. Allow me to take this opportunity to thank those donors who have responded to our emergency appeal to fill the gap in funding for the two rounds of emergency National Immunization Days taking place in April and May of this year, and to remind others that a shortfall of US \$2.3 million still remains, and allow me also to remind everybody that the key of success in immunization is support to quality routine immunization services in immunization is support to quality routine immunization services and quality cold chain. In that respect we encourage all partners of the MoH to join efforts to initiate the rehabilitation of Cold Chain.

Lastly I would also like to attract everybody's attention to the deteriorating nutritional situation of children and women in parts of the country: Afar, Oromya, parts of Somali, Tigray, Amhara and SNNPR. Last December the government of Ethiopia and the UN launched a joint humanitarian appeal which included 112 US \$ millions for non food assistance, at present less than 10 % has been funded. UNICEF increases its efforts for fundraising to allow strengthening of capacities of all partners to respond to this situation.

Thanks you.