

UNICEF Executive Board
Second regular session 2003
15-19 September 2003

Item 8 of the provisional agenda:
Water and sanitation in the context of the MTSP: oral report

Background information

The global challenge in water and sanitation

- Forty per cent of the world's population – 2.4 billion people – lack access to adequate sanitation, and 1.1 billion people are without safe drinking water.
- **The MDG goal to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation** implies a commitment to reach global coverage rates of 90 per cent for water and 76 per cent for sanitation.

Key topics for discussion at the Executive Board:

1. **Water, sanitation and hygiene education for primary schools:** focused support in 25 countries with low enrolment and low water and sanitation coverage, in coordination with the girls' education initiative.

- Poorly designed or non-existent sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools can have a disproportionate effect on girls, discouraging their attendance or causing them to drop out. Unhealthy children cannot go to school as often as they should and are poor learners.
- UNICEF has supported broad partnerships for water, sanitation and hygiene education in schools in over 50 countries focusing on child-friendly facilities, life skills based training and outreach to communities.

Challenge: increase intersectoral collaboration and develop policies and programmes so that all primary schools worldwide have access to water, sanitation and hygiene by 2010.

2. **Emergency preparedness and response:** improving capacities to assess, coordinate and monitor timely and effective emergency interventions to meet the UNICEF core corporate commitments in emergencies.

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- In the majority of countries, UNICEF was requested by our partners to be the designated focal agency for coordinating the planning and response with Governments, NGOs (eg. Oxfam, CARE International) and other emergency partners. UNICEF provides emergency assistance to 30-40 countries annually for water and sanitation.
- Even in emergency situations, UNICEF emphasizes community mobilization and hygiene promotion that are as important for the prevention of disease outbreaks as providing facilities.

Challenge: strengthen national and community capacities for emergency preparedness and response in water, sanitation and hygiene.

3. **Water supply and sanitation for rural communities:** focus on year-round availability of safe water (for family survival, health and productivity) through support to low cost projects, improved water quality monitoring and the promotion of household water treatment in 35 priority countries where coverage rates are the lowest and U5M rates are the highest.

- Over 1.8 million children die every year from diarrhoeal diseases alone. Some 88 per cent of diarrhoea is attributable to unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene.
- Working with Governments, NGOs and communities, UNICEF supports water, sanitation and hygiene programmes targeting poor rural and peri-urban communities. It is a cost effective child survival and development strategy.

Challenge: utilise expertise in community capacity building, low cost appropriate technologies and hygiene promotion through Government, NGOs and donors to achieve global targets for water and sanitation.

4. **Guinea worm disease eradication:** step up efforts to eradicate Guinea worm disease in the last 13 countries (all in Africa), together with key partners, which include the Carter Center, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and WHO.

- UNICEF has contributed to a dramatic reduction in Guinea worm disease cases from approximately 3.5 million in 1986 to 50,000 in 2002, through active participation in the eradication partnership.

Challenge: intensify efforts to eliminate Guinea worm disease in Sudan, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo, which represent 96 per cent of all cases, through the eradication partnership
