

PRESS RELEASE

UNICEF OPENS FIRST FOUR CHILD CENTERS IN FORMER CONFLICT AREA

PANTAN SINAKU, Benar Meriah, 15 March 2007 – UNICEF today opened its first four child centers in the conflict-affected Benar Meriah district. Together with its partner, Child Fund (CF), UNICEF is supporting the Government of Indonesia in promoting psychosocial recovery and reintegration of children and their families from Benar Meriah, who have been affected by the armed conflict between the separatist movement GAM and the Indonesian military. After the signing of the peace agreement in August 2005, UNICEF and its partners have been able to expand their programs into the former conflict areas. The new child centers come in addition to the 21 child centers already established and run by UNICEF in Aceh and Nias.

Community members and young people in the community in Benar Meriah have been trained and supervised by skilled tradesmen and artists to build their own jambo's – traditional huts made of wood on a concrete base - in which to attend the psychosocial and community activities in eight villages, Musara Pakat, Pulau Intan, Reronga, Pantan Sinaku, Lampahan Intak, Rime Raya, Blang Rakal, and Singah Mulo. Each center costs approximately USD 1,500 to build. While the first four are now ready to host activities, the remaining four are scheduled to be completed by the end of June. The eight centers aim to cover 1,000 children and their families.

Under the guidance of key community figures, including the Village Head, community facilitators (one male and one female) have been selected from each community and Child Well Being Committees are being set up to run activities, monitor and discuss key protection issues - separation, disability, sexual exploitation, abuse, trafficking and child labour; to raise awareness and advocate key protection issues; to mobilize community groups - women groups, youth groups and religious leaders; and to address risks and support vulnerable children, women and families.

The centers will also serve as a location for strengthening the role of youth in the reintegration process. Activities such as leadership training; forming community youth clubs and peer support groups; and designing peace building activities will be organized.

About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in 155 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition; good water and sanitation; quality basic education for all boys and girls; and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

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