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PRESS RELEASE

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AFRICAN ORPHANS & CHILDREN WITH AIDS PRIORITY FOR £150M UK GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

International Development Minister Gareth Thomas will today announce how the UK government will spend £150 million over the next three years to support orphans and vulnerable children. Over 80 percent - £123million- will be dedicated to children in Africa.

Speaking at the World Bank in Washington, Gareth Thomas will also announce how DFID has agreed to provide £2.4 million towards a trial on treatment in children with HIV, jointly funded with, and to be run by, the UK's Medical Research Council. This trial is in the early stages of being negotiated and set up but could mean that in future many more children in developing countries would benefit from antiretroviral treatments.

He will announce planned support for UNICEF to help deliver £44 million of the overall £150 million dedicated to help orphans and other vulnerable children.

Gareth Thomas said:

“Eight out of every ten children who have lost parents to AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa. There are more than 34 million orphans in the region today, and at least 11 million of them have lost a parent to AIDS. This is why we are going to spend £123 million in Africa.

More than one in four of the world's population live in extreme poverty. Governments worldwide have agreed to work together to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015, and to other targets including universal primary education and improved healthcare. The British Government is strongly committed to these targets.

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“We also plan to fund a trial - the first of its kind - that will look at ways of providing antiretroviral (ARV) therapy to children that could both reduce costs of treatment and reduce their side effects. This could mean that more children than before would be able to benefit from ARVs. This is yet another example of how DFID is committed to funding science to find practical medical solutions for those living with or vulnerable to HIV.

“The UK Government is one of only two countries, alongside the USA, to commit funding specifically to support orphans and vulnerable children in the developing world. With this further announcement we are taking action to help vulnerable children and reverse the spread of HIV and the impact of AIDS as promised at the launch of our strategy in July.”

The £123 million earmarked for Africa comprises:

- £38 million of planned support delivered through UNICEF to help orphans and children made vulnerable by AIDS, this includes:
 - UK £20 million sub-regional work in the worst affected countries of southern Africa
 - UK £18 million in selected countries in the rest of Africa;
- £85 million in Africa through our DFID country programmes.

Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF said:

"This remarkable donation is an extraordinary recognition of the vast needs of the tens of millions of children whose lives have been brutally disrupted by AIDS. Not only will this money enable UNICEF to help improve the lives of individual

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children affected by HIV/AIDS but it will give a major boost to our efforts to bring global partners together to develop more effective ways to address the AIDS crisis as it impacts children."

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Note to Editors

1. Gareth Thomas will be speaking at the UNICEF/World Bank co-hosted Global Partners Forum on OVCs in Washington. This is the second annual meeting of key stakeholders to step up the global response to meet the needs of children affected by AIDS.
2. In July 2003 the UK Government launched its £1.5bn strategy for tackling HIV and AIDS: 'Taking Action'. The strategy provides the framework for how the UK Government will spend the £1.5bn over the next three years. The Prime Minister announced at the time that at least £150m would be spent helping children whose parents have died from AIDS and other children made vulnerable by AIDS. He also announced a doubling of the UK's contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria over the next three years – increasing the UK donation to over £150m. 'Taking Action' can be found at: www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/hivaidstakingaction.pdf
3. DFID will spend £5 million in Asia where to date far fewer children have lost their parents to AIDS, but where we aim to understand better the lessons from hard affected regions and address the needs of Asian children as the impact of AIDS grows. The £5 million to be spent in Asia comprises £1m through UNICEF to scale up activities in Asia, and £4m direct to Asian countries through DFID country programmes.
4. As part of the 44 million for UNICEF, £5m will support their global activities on children affected by AIDS.
5. The remaining £15 million will be distributed as plans for additional work develop.

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6. The five-year trial of ARVs for children with HIV will be jointly funded by DFID and the MRC. DFID and MRC are each providing £2.4m, for the trial.
7. The proposed trial would assess the following questions:
 - Can anti-HIV drug treatment be given safely with clinical monitoring rather than laboratory test monitoring to check for side effects and how well the drugs are working (tests are expensive and/or unavailable in many resource limited settings)? The clinical monitoring will include growth and weight monitoring, clinical checks for signs and symptoms of HIV disease and drug side effects by a nurse or doctor.
 - What are the best drug combinations for starting treatment in children?
 - Can treatment be interrupted safely in children and could this reduce long-term side effects in children?
8. Such a trial could provide us with information that would enable provision of treatment for HIV infected children for a lower cost, both by reducing the need for expensive laboratory infrastructure and tests and reducing the time children spend on drugs. The results of this trial, if positive will enable a far wider group of children in poor countries to have access to ARV even if they do not live near a laboratory. Laboratory services are often only available in capitals, putting tests out of reach of the vast majority of the population. It could also allow HIV positive children to live more healthy lives as exposure to the toxic side effects of ARVs could be reduced. The need for a trial of this kind and funding to support it has been agreed. DFID and MRC will now take forward discussions for developing the details of the trial for the children of Africa.

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9. The Department for International Development is committed to funding scientific research that can benefit the poorest in developing countries. It recently announced the results of an MRC-designed and led trial that it fully funded that proved that a widely available low cost drug (co-trimoxazole) cut AIDS related deaths in Zambian children with HIV by 43 per cent when used as a prophylactic. WHO and UNICEF have altered their advice as a result of these findings.
10. DFID is the UK Government department responsible for promoting sustainable development and reducing poverty. The central focus of the Government's policy is a commitment to the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015. These seek to:
- a. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
 - b. Achieve universal primary education
 - c. Promote gender equality and empower women
 - d. Reduce child mortality
 - e. Improve maternal health
 - f. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
 - g. Ensure environmental sustainability
 - h. Develop a global partnership for development

For further information please contact Geraldine Platten, DFID press office on 020 7023 0533.

Ends.

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