



National Water Corporation



MEDIA RELEASE

ON WORLD WATER DAY, UNICEF SUDAN STRESSES ROLE OF WATER IN PROMOTING PEACE, RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

Khartoum/Juba 22 March 2007. On this year's World Water Day, UNICEF and partners in Sudan are urging communities to consider the role of water supply in promoting peace, recovery and development, as the nation enters the third year since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed.

Speaking on World Water Day His Excellency Kamal Ali Mohamed, Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources of the Sudanese Government of National Unity, reminded communities that effective management of water supply was critical to poverty reduction, increased school enrolment and literacy rates, improved health and environmental sustainability.

"This year, the global message for World Water Day focuses on the scarcity of water as a resource," said His Excellency Minister Kamal. "In Sudan we want to stress that such scarcity demands that water is managed effectively, requiring dialogue between different communities, collaboration between various partners and donors, and a common vision for managing water supply to benefit society as a whole."

UNICEF estimates that more than 8 million people in North Sudan and 3 million people in rural Southern Sudan – together accounting for almost half of Sudan's total rural population – have no access to safe water supplies, while 20 million people do not benefit from safe sanitation facilities. Water-borne diseases such as diarrhoeal disease, cholera and guinea worm regularly affect large proportions of the population, especially children. Lack of clean water in schools reduces enrolment rates and affects levels of literacy, while poor health caused by lack of clean water and sanitation restricts economic growth and develop for communities.

UNICEF Sudan Representative Ted Chaiban underlined the broader impact of investment in water supply upon community development, saying "Effective water supply management contributes to lasting peace and prosperity – and that is critical in a country such as Sudan, where the dividends of peace are integral to future stability and development."

UNICEF has supported the provision of clean water to some 3 million people across Sudan in 2006, through creation, repair and rehabilitation of safe water points, combined with provision of sanitation facilities for 500,000 people and the delivery of hygiene education programmes to an estimated 3.2 million people. Hygiene promotion is a critical aspect of a broader water supply programme, with good hygiene practices such as hand-washing able to reduce diarrhoeal disease amongst children by up to 40 per cent.

UNICEF also supports local management of water supply, through its focus on operation and maintenance initiatives that encourage communities to take on the day to day responsibility for ensuring the operation of water systems and latrines. This approach brings different communities together, to effectively manage their local water supply.

In Sudan, World Water Day will be celebrated in Kadugli, South Kordofan, with events by local School Hygiene Clubs, seminars on water management and exhibitions, while in Juba events being led by the Ministries of Water Resources and Irrigation, Cooperatives and Rural Development and Land, Housing and Utilities include a symposium drawing together government officials, politicians and humanitarian agencies, and performances by drama groups, poets and singers.

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