

STATEMENT

Statement by UNICEF Executive Director, Ann M. Veneman on World Health Day, 2009

NEW YORK, 7 April 2009 - "The critical importance of healthcare to emergency response is the theme for this year's World Health Day 2009. The annual day commemorates the founding of the World Health Organization (WHO).

"The impact of man-made and natural disasters falls disproportionately on women and children. Where healthcare systems have been disrupted by disasters, children are at greater risk of disease.

"When emergencies become more protracted and complex, the prospects for disease increase and the proportion of children reached through health interventions decreases.

"The primary health conditions that cause children's deaths in emergency situations remain much the same as they are where there is no emergency – measles, malaria, diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory infections.

"However their incidence and their effects are compounded by nutritional deficiencies that are another consequence of emergencies, and by reduced access to health systems and treatment.

"The health of women and children must be a primary consideration, and their needs assessed, in every emergency response."

About the UNICEF Executive Director:

Ann M. Veneman was appointed by the United Nations Secretary General as UNICEF's fifth Executive Director on May 1, 2005. As the leading children's agency of the UN, UNICEF is on the ground in more than 150 developing countries helping children to survive and thrive. The agency works to advance the Millennium Development Goals by supporting child health and nutrition, quality basic education for all, access to clean water and sanitation and the protection of children from violence, exploitation and HIV/AIDS. Veneman directs a global agency of over 10,000 staff and annual total resources of more than \$3 billion. Since becoming Executive Director, she has traveled around the world, witnessing firsthand the work of UNICEF, speaking at meetings and conferences, and visiting heads of state or government and other partners. Prior to joining UNICEF, Veneman held positions in both state and national government including United States Secretary of Agriculture. Veneman holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of California, Davis; a master of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley; and a juris doctor degree from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law.

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