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**United Nations Children's Fund**

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**For information**

**UNICEF Executive Board**

**Field visit to Ethiopia by members of the Executive Board,  
17-22 April 2005\*\***

**I. Introduction**

1. The UNICEF Executive Board members from Belarus, El Salvador, Japan, Malawi, Myanmar, the Netherlands and Sweden visited Ethiopia from 17 to 22 April 2005. This visit provided the delegation with first-hand insight into the operations of the UNICEF country office. The delegation had the opportunity to discuss matters with the UNICEF country team, representatives of the United Nations country team and government officials of the host country.

Field trips were organized to project sites selected by the country office. Through the field trips the Board members interacted with regional and local government and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners.

2. This report gives a general impression of programme delivery, the overall programme environment and the major challenges that UNICEF is facing as a result of changes in the political environment as well as in the governance structure.

**II. Background**

3. Ethiopia is one of the largest African countries in terms of size and population. It is a landlocked

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\* E/ICEF/2005/7.

\*\* The delay in the submission of this report was due to consultations among team members.

country that over time has faced many problems, including recurrent droughts, deforestation and other environmental degradation, and food insecurity. The country has a fast-growing, diverse population consisting of hundreds of different ethnic groups. Low investments in human and social capital, particularly in rural areas, combined with civil strife, outbreaks of diseases and severe droughts, are some of the underlying causes of extreme poverty and the high incidence of infant and maternal mortality.

4. The current country programme of cooperation for 2002-2006 focuses on six programme areas: health and nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene education; HIV/AIDS; basic education, with special interventions for girls' education that aim to tackle the gender gap of 20 percentage points at primary and secondary school levels; gender and child protection; and finally, capacity-building of regional and *woreda* (district) institutions in programme monitoring and evaluation. The country programme is managed by the country office in Addis Ababa and by out-posted staff in five field locations, i.e., Awassa (Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region, or SNNPR), Jijiga (Somali), Bahar Dar (Amhara), Gambela town (Gambela) and Maleke (Tigray).

5. Most relevant for the situation in Ethiopia are the health and nutrition interventions introduced to ensure adequate response to emergencies related to food insecurity and disease outbreak. UNICEF introduced one strategy to enhance its outreach to the most vulnerable *woredas*. Another, the Enhanced Outreach Strategy (EOS), is targeting children under 5. Interventions include vitamin A supplementation; de-worming; growth monitoring and screening of children, pregnant and lactating women; participatory education on better hygiene, nutrition and health practices (including promotion of routine immunization); and HIV/AIDS prevention. EOS is reaching out to 325 food-insecure *woredas* in 10 regions, covering at least 6,780,000 children under 5, thereby ensuring their access to a minimum of child survival interventions, including the food component. The nutritional status of children under 5 is closely monitored and included in early warning systems as a way to prevent acute and severe malnutrition. UNICEF cooperates closely with World Food Programme (WFP) in providing supplementary feeding to children under 5 and to pregnant and lactating women.

6. With the implementation of EOS, UNICEF seeks to ensure the sustainability of key child survival interventions in health services, while creating a bridge to the long-term solution of the Health Extension Programme (also strongly supported by UNICEF).

7. Statistics indicate many challenges faced. While the number of children having access to primary education has tripled over the past years, the female literacy rate still remains at only 30 per cent. Only 30 per cent of the population has access to health services within 5 km (60 per cent within 10 km). Some 47 million people do not have access to safe water, and 61 million people have no access to improved sanitation. The rural water supply and sanitation coverage in Ethiopia is the lowest in the world. While, for example, an estimated \$42 per capita would be needed to establish health services to reach the health-related Millennium Development Goals, according to the Millennium Project, the public expenditure on health is only \$1.20. According to a recently completed Millennium Development Goals needs assessment carried out by the United Nations team, the World Bank and the Millennium Project in Ethiopia, the total official development assistance (ODA) for Ethiopia will need to be in the order of \$5 billion per year, while the present level is only about \$1 billion. This amount is equivalent to \$13 per capita, which is only about one third of average ODA to countries in sub-Saharan Africa and, consequently not enough to break the

cycle of poverty.

8. In order to address the critical situation, the Government has created a number of initiatives. These include the Productive Safety Nets Programme, targeting especially the most vulnerable population in the drought-affected areas of the country. The delay in the launch of the programme has adversely impacted the current situation in some of the drought-prone areas. The Government has also started a resettlement programme aiming to relocate populations within regions to more productive areas. An important initiative is the Health Extension Programme, aiming to more than double the health services capacity by recruiting and training 25,000 new female health workers.

9. The field presence of UNICEF was significantly curtailed in 1997, as it was viewed by the Government as creating unwelcome parallel implementation processes. Therefore, UNICEF currently has a field presence in a limited number of regions agreed by the Government. These are the 'emerging regions' (Afar, Somali, Gambela, Benishangul-Gumuz) and the southern region (SNNPR) in need of drought-emergency response.

10. The Board's visit coincided with the parliamentary election campaign. One of the key political issues for the Government is the implementation of a decentralization programme aimed at relinquishing a degree of central power to the regional and local governments. The highly centralized government structure was viewed as hampering people's participation in development planning and in programme implementation.

### **III. Factors affecting programme implementation**

11. Food security in Ethiopia has long seized the attention of the international community. Addressing emergencies and providing humanitarian assistance have therefore become major components in the operations of UNICEF. Learning from past experiences, UNICEF has adopted strategies to respond adequately to emergencies and at the same time to support capacity-building, particularly in emergency preparedness and early warning.

12. Attracting the necessary funds to sustain results and to overcome the transition from emergency to longer-term development remains a major challenge. Experience has shown that humanitarian appeals have been characterized by some degree of funding for food items but by less or no funding for non-food items. About 56 per cent of the food requirements of the December 2004 Humanitarian Appeal had been met at the time of the visit, whereas only 20 per cent of non-food requirements had been met. The situation is a vivid example of the critical need for achieving a balance in food and non-food assistance to achieve sustainable results.

13. A quick look at the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals reveals that Ethiopia will have serious constraints in reaching any of the Goals, including those in education, health and water. As mentioned above, the current public investment in health amounts to about \$1.20 per person per year, whereas a minimum of \$15 per person per year is needed to really make a difference (the Millennium Project argues for \$ 42 per capita per year). In education, the prospects are slightly better, but the task of providing basic education to all of Ethiopia's children is still daunting. One compounding problem is the high

number of children and young people – especially girls – who have already lost their chance to complete a basic education. For them, a rapid scale-up of alternative, non-formal learning opportunities is crucial. The water sector could be potentially ready for dramatic improvement, thanks to the recent introduction of more cost-effective water-drilling technology in which UNICEF has played a key role. This advancement increases the prospects of attaining the Goals relating to water and the environment, but considerable resources still need to be secured in order to provide safe water to all of the 47 million people still in need.

#### **IV Cooperation with the Government**

14. The Government's focus on future-oriented, long-term development, and on preventing emergencies rather than dealing with their after-effects, was evident in all of the delegation's contacts with the Ethiopian authorities, from the federal to local levels. The UNICEF country team, in line with government policy, seeks to integrate emergencies into the longer-term development programmes.

15. Government agencies tend to regard UNICEF more as a donor rather than as a partner in development cooperation. The delegation felt that there is a need for the Government to utilize more fully the capabilities of UNICEF in the spheres of monitoring, analysis, and policy development and implementation. The most straightforward way of doing this would be to ensure a wider field presence of joint United Nations agency teams.

#### **V. Coordination with the United Nations country team**

16. The delegation noted with appreciation that the United Nations country team is well in place and is working on some important issues. One important area of inter-agency cooperation is the monitoring of the process towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Assessments have been undertaken recently covering several areas, namely, education, water and sanitation, rural and urban development, private sector development, HIV/AIDS, and gender equality, in order to determine what is needed for Ethiopia to reach the Millennium Development Goals in 2015. The United Nations country team members are working jointly to produce a synthesis report that will form the basis of the second Sustainable Development Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme as well as of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, due in 2007.

17. The United Nations country team members are also working together in HIV/AIDS. The UNICEF Representative is the chair of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. The United Nations team members are cooperating to support the Government in capacity-building as part of the devolution of responsibilities to local government.

#### **VI. Cooperation with NGOs**

18. The delegation commends UNICEF for partnerships with NGOs, which have proven critical in areas such as sexual and reproductive rights (voluntary counselling and testing services for young people), HIV/AIDS and health and nutrition (therapeutic feeding centres). The delegation held the view that there is a critical need for the Government to develop common ground for long-term NGO commitment and partnership.

## **VII. Cooperation with bilateral donors**

19. As part of the United Nations country team, UNICEF is engaged in regular consultations with other donors in the Development Assistance Committee poverty group and in thematic team groups. This engagement has proven to be particularly effective in several areas, including water sector development in the SNNPR.

## **VIII. Field visits**

### **(a) Youth in Addis Ababa**

20. UNICEF Ethiopia attaches great importance to youth participation. A number of youth organizations benefit from technical and financial support from UNICEF that is crucial for the implementation of their interventions. One such organization is the Youth Forum, created as a follow-up to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children. Besides conducting peer education in matters relating to HIV/AIDS, the Forum has conducted surveys to determine the causes of school dropout. The collaboration of UNICEF with the Youth Forum indicates the weight that UNICEF gives to youth participation. The Forum, however, needs to broaden its membership so as to truly represent the entire youth population.

21. The visit to the Kirkos Youth Centre threw some light on the existing challenges in HIV/AIDS and voluntary counselling and testing. The delegation was informed that girls were more affected by the pandemic than boys. While noting that some achievements have been registered, the delegation considered that more efforts were needed to encourage wider use by young people of the available services. Emphasis should be placed on prevention, as the percentage of youth living with the virus is still relatively low. In addition, the constant shortage of supplies, such as contraceptives, needs to be addressed.

### **(b) The Southern Nationalities, Nations and Peoples Regional State**

22. The delegation visited the SNNPR for three days. The region suffers from chronic water shortage due to erratic rains. This situation leads to crop failures and bad livestock conditions that result in food shortages. In addition, the replacement of food crops with cash crops in many areas has contributed to the increased vulnerability of the population. Most households, particularly those in rural areas, have only limited access to water. This is especially significant considering that 92 per cent of the 13.5 million people in the region lives in rural areas.

23. During the 2003 humanitarian crisis, the SNNPR was severely affected with serious levels of malnutrition. UNICEF was invited by the Government in 2003 to re-establish its presence there, and the organization played a major role in responding to the emergency. UNICEF currently has 29 staff in the region embedded in government offices. EOS for Child Survival has been effectively introduced by UNICEF in partnership with the Government and WFP as a bridge to the Health Extension Programme. The strategy has enabled the screening of 1.5 million children in the region for malnutrition and referrals to therapeutic and supplementary feeding support.

24. Meetings were held with the Head of the Regional Health Bureau and his administrative staff, communities of the Boricha drought-affected districts, the Derara Therapeutic Feeding Center, the Derara Health Post, water-drilling projects in Shebedino Woreda, the Girls' Education Programme in Kedida Gamela Woreda and the Bongodo Primary School. On HIV/AIDS, the delegation held discussions with the Coordinator of the Regional HIV/AIDS Office and had the opportunity to appreciate the work of the Hibir Network of Anti-HIV/AIDS Clubs. A pre-school for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS and income-generating activities of the Anti-HIV/AIDS Clubs were also visited.

25. The delegation held very fruitful and enlightening discussions with the President of the SNNPR on several occasions. The discussions clearly indicated that the political leadership at the regional level appreciated the presence and cooperation of UNICEF not only during emergency situations but also in the long-term, as a development partner.

26. Discussions included the following issues: the Health Extension Programme; child survival initiatives, focusing on the interventions spearheaded by UNICEF for the severe food, nutrition and health crises; girls' education; water, sanitation and hygiene education; the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its impact; and the interventions at the regional level. The delegation also witnessed the inauguration of the water rigs donated by UNICEF, with the support from Development Cooperation Ireland, in Shebedino Woreda.

27. The field visit to the UNICEF office in the SNNPR afforded the delegation an opportunity to appreciate the practical and invaluable role that the UNICEF team continues to play in Ethiopia. The delegation appreciated the collaboration between UNICEF and the regional government and the regional bureaus responsible for the technical sectors. While appreciating the fact that there is room for improvement, the delegation members would like to share their view that the case of UNICEF support to SNNPR is one of the best practices that need to be replicated with the other regional governments.

## **IX. Briefing on the UNICEF Liaison Office to the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa and the New Partnership for Africa's Development**

28. The delegation was briefed on the work of the UNICEF Liaison Office to the African Union (AU), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The delegation duly noted the centrality of the office in helping to shape the African Union policies in the sphere of the work of UNICEF, the amount of advocacy work done by the office and the responsibility it bears for linking with the three UNICEF regional offices in Africa. At the same time, the delegation noted the apparently inadequate level of staffing and funding of the office. Also emphasized was the necessity for UNICEF to support the work of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which monitors the compliance of Member States with the provisions of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

## **X. Concluding observations**

29. The following observations were made based on the delegation's short experience in Addis Ababa and the SNNPR:

- The UNICEF team in Ethiopia is a group of committed and able professionals. The rich experience of the team leadership in African and development matters significantly contributes to the thoughtfulness and thoroughness of the team efforts.
- A shared sense of purpose and the productive, close and cooperative relationship between the Government and the UNICEF office are crucial factors in the successful delivery of development assistance to the country. The delegation highly praises this cooperation.
- UNICEF interventions are very much in line with the National Strategic Plan for Child Survival. One case in point is the EOS for Child Survival, an intervention that bridges with the Health Extension Service Programme.
- UNICEF has a key role to play in the consolidation of emergency and development assistance to ensure the sustainability of programmes.
- UNICEF has much work to do to convince the Government to focus on women and children, particularly special groups such as orphans, children with disabilities and children who live or work on the street.
- Some of the major challenges for UNICEF in the field include delays in the workings of bureaucracy, which tend to slow programme implementation, low implementation capacity and high staff turnover at the *woreda* level.
- Regarding child protection issues, there is need for more comprehensive, objective-oriented and clear-cut programmes regarding children who live or work on the street, child trafficking, female genital mutilation, HIV/AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children, child-headed households, children with disabilities and the involvement of men and boys in improving the protective environment. It was noted that, with repeated crises, child protection has been sidelined. The delegation sees a critical role for UNICEF in advocating more strongly for child protection.
- There is an urgent need to scale up the focus on maternal health, since more than 80 per cent of women lack adequate access to health and reproductive services.
- The rural communities in the SNNPR are very committed to making a difference in their own situation but are challenged by a multiplicity of interlinked factors. These include chronic water shortage; low health indicators; poor sanitation; high rates of school dropout, especially among girls; food insecurity; and gender inequality. It is very critical to broaden and strengthen collaboration between UNICEF and the entire United Nations country team, the regional government, NGOs and all other relevant stakeholders, including the communities themselves.
- The Government has a clear sense of what is to be done. However, it would be expedient if critical and large-scale innovative decisions significantly affecting the humanitarian situation in the country were taken by the Government in close consultation with the international community to ensure the availability of adequate resources for development as well as the timely provision of required assistance.
- Joint programming among all agencies and funds of the United Nations system, as well as with regional governments and all other relevant stakeholders in the field, is a priority that has to be addressed in order to harmonize and simplify operations.
- It is necessary to increase the capacity of the UNICEF Liaison Office to the AU, ECA and NEPAD – in terms of structure, requirements and staffing – so that the office can meet the challenges it faces in fulfilling its responsibilities.

## **Acknowledgements**

30. The delegation would like to express its sincere gratitude to the UNICEF Representative in Ethiopia and the entire country team for their support and warm hospitality. Special appreciation is also extended to the staff based in the SNNRP for coordinating the programme and accompanying the delegation during the visit to the region.

31. The invaluable support provided by the Executive Board secretariat before, during and after the visit is greatly appreciated. The field trip enriched the delegation members, individually and collectively, with the invaluable experience gained.

## **Annex I**

### **List of participants in the field visit by members of the Executive Board of UNICEF to Ethiopia, 17-22 April 2005**

#### **Head of Delegation**

H.E. Mr. Andrei Dapkiunas

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations

#### **Rapporteur**

Ms. Jane Asani-Ndelemani

First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Malawi to the United Nations

#### **Rapporteur**

Ms. Hariëtte K. Mingoen

Senior Policy Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

Ms. Beatriz Alfaro

Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of El Salvador to the United Nations

Ms. Maya Tanigaki

Official, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Division

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

Mr. Aung Lynn

Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations

Mr. Alireza Javaheri

Desk Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden

Ms. Kirsi Madi

Assistant Secretary of the Executive Board of UNICEF

## Annex II

### Summary of the programme of the field visit

#### Monday 18 April

1. Meetings with the UNICEF country management team
2. Meeting with the United Nations country team
3. Working Lunch with the State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister of Water Resources and Commissioner for Disaster Preparedness and Prevention
4. Visit to Kirkos Youth Center providing voluntary counselling and testing services
5. Meeting with Ethiopian Youth Forum

#### Tuesday 19 April

1. Meeting with UNICEF staff based in the SNNPR
2. Meeting with the Head of Regional Health Bureau and the staff
3. Visit to Boricha drought-affected districts and meetings with the district administration and community
4. Visit to the Derara Therapeutic Feeding Center
5. Working Dinner hosted by the SNNPR Regional President, with the participation of the Head of Regional Health Bureau, Head of Regional Water Resources Bureau, Deputy Head of Water Resources Bureau, Deputy Head of Rural Development Bureau

#### Wednesday 20 April

1. Visit to water-drilling projects in Shebedino Woreda, including inauguration ceremony of a rig
2. Meetings with the community and with staff of the Regional Water Resources Bureau
3. Visit to a school and girls' education programme in Kedida Gamela Woreda; meeting with the community

#### Thursday 21 April

1. Debriefing meeting with the SNNPR Regional President
2. Meeting with the Head of HIV/AIDS Secretariat (Hapco)
3. Visit to pre-school for orphans supported by volunteers of the Hibir Network of Anti HIV/AIDS clubs
4. Visit to income generating activities of the Anti- HIV/AIDS clubs
5. Meeting with UNICEF Liaison Office with the AU, ECA and NEPAD

6. Working Dinner hosted by the UNICEF Representative with the Minister of Education, State Minister of Information, Minister of Water Resources, Commissioner for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness, Ambassador of Japan, United Nations country team members, and UNICEF staff

**Friday 22 April**

1. Meeting with the President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
  2. Press Conference
  3. Working lunch with representatives of Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Turkey
  4. Debriefing meeting with UNICEF country management team
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