



## PRESS RELEASE

**Khartoum, 14 February 2005**

### **Safe Water for Darfur**

Today, the Federal Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources, Mr. Kamal Ali Mohamed took delivery of a drilling rig from UNICEF on behalf of the National Water Corporation (NWC). The rig will strengthen their capacity to provide safe drinking water for internally displaced persons and residents affected by the conflict in Darfur. The cost of the rig was \$400,000 and its purchase was made possible by the generous contribution provided by the British Government, through DFID (The UK Department for International Development).

At present, potable water in Darfur is in short supply. Many wells and water systems in Darfur are in disrepair or have been rendered inoperable by the ongoing crisis. The high concentration of people in crowded IDP camps has stretched local resources beyond capacity. UNICEF has worked closely with NWC and NGO partners to increase access to safe water for approximately one million conflict affected persons in Darfur – through the combined strategies of borehole drilling, rehabilitation and installation of new hand pumps or water systems as well as water tankering. Whilst these efforts are significant, more still needs to be done to reach all of the 2.5 million persons affected by the crisis.

To achieve this goal, UNICEF is also supporting WES in establishing an effective ground water resource management programme which is vital in ensuring that the drilling of boreholes is carried out in a planned and coordinated manner to prevent ground water depletion which could have long term negative consequences.

Her Majesty's Ambassador to Khartoum, William Patey, said "The British Government is committed to a strategic partnership with UNICEF and has contributed £25 million to its programmes in Sudan as well as providing a number of secondees and non-programme support. UNICEF's work in Darfur and in the key area of water provision is an essential part of the humanitarian response to the current crisis."

"With this new drilling rig the National Water Corporation, with the support of UNICEF, will be able to dramatically expand its water supply coverage in a more efficient and accelerated manner, bringing assistance to those most in need - children and women," said Keith McKenzie, UNICEF Special Representative for the Darfur Emergency, who highlighted that traditionally, women and children shoulder the burden of collecting water for the families. "They often walk for several hours each day in the barren and hostile lands of Darfur. The new water points established around IDP camps and in host villages will not only reduce this arduous and hazardous journey, but will provide a more viable and sustainable solution for the Darfur region", he added.

Today, the new rig will depart for El Geneina, West Darfur where it will be commissioned and is programmed to drill around 35 boreholes. The rig will then be moved to other states in Darfur. This new rig will provide critical support to the intensive drilling efforts undertaken by the NWC before the rainy season sets in June, when conditions make it very difficult for drilling operations.



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### NOTES FOR THE EDITORS:

The drilling rig, procured by UNICEF from the generous contribution from the British Government, costs an estimated 400,000 US dollars and is expected to drill up to 1,000 boreholes during an estimated life span of 8 to 10 years. In the first six months of 2005, UNICEF along with NWC and other NGO partners, plan to drill around 250 boreholes in the Darfur region to provide safe drinking water to an additional 312,500 conflicted affected people. This new rig has the capacity to drill boreholes to depths of 150 meters and can drill about 100 such wells each year, depending on hydrogeological conditions. Most of these boreholes will be fitted with hand pumps and provide safe water to approximately 500 people. Selected boreholes will be fitted with mechanized pumping systems with the capacity to provide safe water to several thousand people.

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