

***** Press Release *****

UNICEF Appeals for \$237 million for Emergencies in West and Central Africa

Dakar – 13 February 2008. – UNICEF has launched an appeal for funds to assist emergency efforts in ten countries in West and Central Africa and to bolster emergency preparedness.

The launch of the appeal and the 2008 Humanitarian Action Report in the region came as UNICEF teams were working with other agencies to assist tens of thousands of refugees in Chad who escaped fighting in Darfur, and people who fled to Cameroon from N'Djamena.

The region in addition has other 'forgotten emergencies' such as the daily effects of malnutrition on tens of thousands of children and one of the world's biggest ongoing emergencies in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Last year UNICEF in that country reached more than a million beneficiaries in North Kivu alone.

Speaking in Dakar UNICEF's Regional Director said that while it is big events that often attract attention, many people are poor and the slightest disruption to their lives can make them and their children exceptionally vulnerable.

'Last year UNICEF in several countries assisted people who lost their homes or livelihoods because of floods. Experience has taught us that communities and families on the ground must be equipped with knowledge and skills to better prepare and cope with disasters when they happen,' said Dr. Esther Guluma. "Partnerships with communities, governments, UN agencies, NGOs and the private sector are crucial not only to delivering the aid that is needed, but to pass on information that can save lives."

Last year, 52% of UNICEF's requested emergency funds were received. UNICEF looks forward to continue working with all donors and partners to save lives of children affected by emergencies and to improve disaster response.

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