



EUROPEAN UNION



MINISTRY OF HEALTH



Visit of European Commissioner Neven Mimica to Samburu

Samburu County launches EU funded Maternal and Child Nutrition programme.

Nairobi, Kenya, 18 September 2015 – As part of an official visit to Kenya, on 18 September 2015, the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, will join the Samburu County officials in the launch of the implementation phase of the Maternal and Child Nutrition programme. This four year programme is funded by the European Union (EU), and implemented in partnership with Kenya's Ministry of Health (MoH) and UNICEF.

The €19-million programme targets nine counties including Samburu, to support deprived communities in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands.

"The EU is committed to help strengthen the resilience of communities who have suffered recurrent food shortages as a result of drought and other crises," says the Commissioner, who is also visiting Uganda and Rwanda on his first official mission to East Africa. "This programme should also benefit the rest of the country, particularly addressing Kenya's high levels of child malnutrition. One quarter or 1.9 million of all Kenyan children under the age of 5 are stunted, which means they are too short for their age and may not achieve their full developmental potential. Therefore, investing in this programme is important not only for Kenya's children, but also the country's economic and social development," adds Mimica.

The programme is part of a wider regional programme entitled *Supporting the Horn of Africa Resilience (SHARE)*. In Samburu, the Commissioner will be joined by high-level dignitaries including the Governor of Samburu, Moses Lenolkulal; Samburu county and national government officials, civil society organisations and UN agencies including UNICEF.

This launch will be the first of nine county implementation launches which follow the launch of the national programme on 19 February 2015 in Nairobi by Margaret Kenyatta, First Lady of the Republic of Kenya and patron of the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) movement.

The main beneficiaries of the Maternal and Child Nutrition programme will be children under the age of 5 and women in the nine counties of Kilifi, Kitui, Kwale, Mandera, Samburu, Tana River, Turkana, Wajir and West Pokot.

Under the programme, government partners, UN and civil society will work together to strengthen health systems and to empower communities, particularly women, to withstand the impact of drought and other crises. This entails helping them to adopt healthier practices, such as exclusive breastfeeding; diversified and age-appropriate infant feeding practices; better hygiene and increased uptake of treatment for common childhood illnesses.

During the visit to Samburu, the EU Commissioner will also have the opportunity to visit different multi-sectoral programmes addressing malnutrition and will be able to see the different activities of the UNICEF-supported Child Health Day. The Child Health Days are a strategy of the MoH to increase children's and mothers' access to nutrition and health services which include: antenatal care, immunization, as well as interventions to prevent and treat malnutrition, particularly during the first 1,000 days of a child's life.

Officer-in-charge UNICEF Kenya, Ms Madhavi Ashok, stresses, "It is critical that we prevent chronic nutritional deficiency during the first 1,000 days of a child's life, as after that time, the resulting cognitive and physical damage is irreversible." Ms Ashok also adds, "The EU Maternal and Child Nutrition programme is a key initiative towards taking the necessary action to fulfil the right of all children in Kenya to good nutrition."

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