



Press release

Agreement between UNICEF and the Baylor College of Medicine to scale up HIV/AIDS pediatric treatment in West and Central Africa

Dakar, 12 January 2007. The UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office and the Baylor College of Medicine International Pediatric AIDS Initiative (BIPAI) signed an agreement today in Dakar for the scale up of HIV/AIDS treatment, care and support of children and families in West and Central Africa.

Barbara Bentein, UNICEF Regional Deputy Director for West and Central Africa and Michael B. Mizwa, Vice President, International Affairs, of Baylor's International Pediatric AIDS Initiative signed on behalf of the two organizations.

"The significance of this agreement cannot be overstated. There are over 600,000 children in the Western and Central Africa region living with HIV/AIDS, few of which receive care, treatment and support. Baylor College of Medicine's alliance with UNICEF is a major step in creating partnerships that will result in expanded capacity and greater access to HIV/AIDS care, treatment, support and prevention." said Michael B. Mizwa. "Today only 2,5% of the 220,000 children urgently in need of antiretroviral treatment in West and Central Africa effectively receive it. We cannot afford to lose time. Therefore it is urgent to unite forces and strengthen the partnerships, such as the one signed today with BIPAI" declared Barbara Bentein.

UNICEF has made tackling HIV and AIDS a top priority both at the global and regional level. This partnership between UNICEF West and Central Africa regional office and BIPAI intends to accomplish specified goals and outcomes of the Global Campaign "Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS", launched with UNAIDS and other partners in October 2005. UNICEF and BIPAI have agreed to the rapid development and implementation of a partnership to assist countries in the scale-up of HIV/AIDS treatment, care and support of children and families in resource constrained settings. The UNICEF Regional Office will share this agreement with its 24 Country Representatives in the region.

"This is an important step, underlined Barbara Bentein. This agreement gives to the 24 UNICEF country offices in the region the opportunity to tap BIPAI's highly qualified expertise and thus better support the implementation of national programs and ensure that children get access to quality services."

A BIPAI mission paid a working visit to Sierra Leone early January 2007, to assess the needs for Pediatric Care and Support to the country. The agreement between BIPAI and UNICEF/Sierra Leone should be effective within a few weeks.



About BIPAI

The Baylor College of Medicine International Pediatric AIDS Initiative was established in 1996 to foster international HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment, health professional education, and clinical research. It has rapidly grown to become the largest university-based program worldwide dedicated to improving the health and lives of HIV-infected children. The mission of the Baylor College of Medicine International Pediatric AIDS Initiative and its affiliated non-government organizations in Romania, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi and Uganda is to conduct a program of high quality, high impact, highly ethical pediatric and family HIV/AIDS care and treatment, health professional training, and clinical research.

About UNICEF

For 60 years UNICEF has been the world's leader for children, working on the ground in 156 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

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