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Canadians reach out to Haiti's children

Toronto: Canadian Feed The Children (CFTC) is sending \$1 million worth of medicine to Haiti to treat and prevent outbreaks of deadly waterborne disease resulting from contaminated water and flooded latrines.

Anti-malarials, anti-parasitics, antibiotics and pain-killers will be air-lifted from Canada to Port-au-Prince the week of October 4 and distributed to

- hospital patients in Gonaives, the town hardest hit by floods resulting from Hurricane Jeanne;
- Hospital Claire Heureuse in Dessalines, a town approximately 40 kms from Gonaives;
- many community health clinics in and around Port-au-Prince operated by CFTC's partners.

"Waterborne disease is a real and urgent threat right now in Haiti, and medical treatment is critical if we are to save lives," says CFTC Board Member Dr. Mark Wise, a specialist in travel and tropical medicine. Getting medicine there quickly will save many thousands of children. Unfortunately, because there's more water around, there is also a higher risk of insect-borne diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever. Children, many of whom are already malnourished, are at the greatest risk of death."

Because of the disruption of the local water supply, which is already threatened, people are forced to drink from contaminated sources. This leads to the spread of infectious diseases, such as diarrhea, typhoid fever and Hepatitis A. Children are the most vulnerable to disease and death.

To co-ordinate the transportation and distribution of medicine, CFTC is working in Canada and Haiti with International Child Care (ICC), one of its three local partners in the Port-au-Prince area. On hand as well to ensure community members benefit from these medicines are CFTC's other local partners: Service Oecumenique d'Entraide and Organisation de la Mission Evangelique de Salem. CFTC's field representative, Madsen Gachette, who lives and works in the Port-au-Prince area is in constant communication with CFTC in its Toronto office and will be assisting the partners to ensure as many children as possible benefit.

"Haiti has lost so many of its precious children already," says CFTC Executive Director Jim Dahl. "We're doing all we can to prevent any further loss of life. And it's on behalf of our donors – Canadian families – that we're taking such decisive action. Their compassion is evident through the donations they've made at this time of crisis. The situation is such, however, that we urgently need continued support to buy more medicine, and save more lives."

Many of the thousands left homeless by the floods have begun migrating to Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas, causing a strain on services provided by CFTC and its local partners. During this time of crisis, and beyond, CFTC is committed to the continued provision of vaccinations, medical care and food distribution.

CFTC has been working in Haiti for 10 years providing food, clean water, medicine and shelter.

Earlier in 2004, CFTC airlifted vital medicines and purchased thousand of kilograms of nutritious food, as well as shipped hospital supplies and equipment, school materials, bicycles and seeds that were used in CFTC's project sites in and around Port-au-Prince.

Canadians can support the children of Haiti by making an online donation to Canadian Feed The Children at www.feedkidsnow.ca/haiti or calling 1-866-292-FEED.

Available for media interviews:

- CFTC's Executive Director Jim Dahl
- Board Member Dr. Mark Wise
- Program Manager André Leite, who has just returned to Toronto from Haiti on October 2

Canadian Feed The Children is an independent, registered charity whose goal is to alleviate the impact of poverty on children. We work with local partners overseas and in Canada to enhance the well-being of children and the self-sufficiency of their families and communities.