

UNICEF Situation Report Swaziland - External

26 September 2007

SITUATION UPDATE

The winter season is nearing its end. There is a clear trend of rising temperatures after what has been an uncharacteristically cold winter for Swaziland.

There has been notable progress in the emergency response in several areas. The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and FAO have accelerated distribution of seeds and agricultural tools. The distribution has been finalized in six constituencies, benefiting 11,695 households, and will be completed in time for the planting season in October.

Stakeholders are also making concerted efforts in monitoring the water situation in affected regions and improving the response to these findings. To date, the Water Crisis Committee has drilled 23 boreholes and rehabilitated 16 water infrastructures in three constituencies. Despite the acute water shortage in the low veldt, available data did not show an upsurge of diarrhoeal diseases. Reports of cholera cases appeared in a local newspaper last week. However, these reports are not supported by clinical findings from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

UNICEF RESPONSE

Health and Nutrition/WASH:

Nutrition sentinel surveillance entered its fifth week. Data from five sites that have reported consistently over the past four weeks show that acute malnutrition rates remain steady. These five sites are clinics located in three of the country's four regions:

- Lubulini Clinic in Lubombo
- Tikhuba Clinic in Lubombo
- Gilgal Clinic in Lubombo
- Motshani Clinic in Hhohho
- Sigangeni Clinic in Shiselweni

According to the data -- taken during child welfare clinics where between 125 and 250 children were screened -- 15 to 20 per cent of children under-five were malnourished. Two to 3 per cent of the same group of under-fives were severely malnourished. See Figure 1.

UNICEF will continue to strengthen capacity at sentinel sites to facilitate consistent reporting from an increased number of sites.

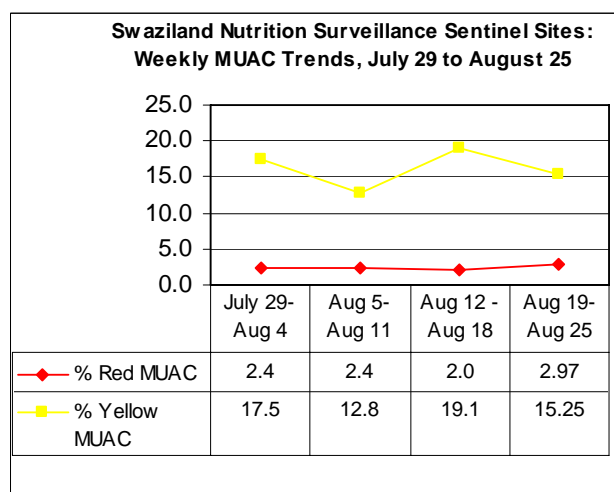


Figure 1

Nutrition sentinel surveillance for the first four weeks of reporting. Data from five clinic sites was used in the figure.

Mbabane Government Hospital in the Hhohho region, Good Shepherd Hospital in the Lubombo region and Hlatikhulu Hospital in the Shiselweni region are fully functioning Therapeutic Feeding Centre (TFC) sites. Pigg's Peak Hospital in northern Hhohho and RFM Hospital in Manzini, will begin providing therapeutic feeding this week.

In collaboration with Swaziland Water Services Cooperation (SWSC), water from each of the five hospitals serving as TFCs was tested in preparation for therapeutic feeding. The water supply in all five TFCs is generally sufficient. Water quality was also acceptable in all sites except Hlatikhulu Hospital and Good Shepherd Hospital. Good Shepherd is often forced to source water from a spring as the water supply from SWSC is not reliable. To improve water quality at Good Shepherd, the spring will be decommissioned and the current service reservoir will be emptied for cleaning. Water will be trucked to the Hospital as a substitute supply while the spring source is brought up to acceptable quality. UNICEF is working with SWSC to address the needs at Hlatikhulu hospital to ensure a safe water supply.

The training of up to 200 health workers as well as the establishment of six more TFC sites is in progress.

To improve monitoring and reporting, the Swaziland National Nutrition Council (SNNC) recently trained 120 health workers participating in nutrition surveillance and established regional nutrition focal persons. With support from UNICEF, SNNC is now drafting a national nutrition policy for the country.

Child Protection

Sixty "survival kits" for forest fire victims were handed over to Swaziland Red Cross on 4 September 2007, bringing the total number of UNICEF-donated kits to 150. This marks fulfilment of UNICEF's commitment to the Government to support the victims of the forest fires that ravaged Swaziland in August.

Preliminary findings of a national study on violence against children will be disseminated on 12 September by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office. The study was conducted in May-June 2007 by UNICEF, in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, and in close partnership with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Civil Society Organizations, and United Nations Country Teams (UNCT). The findings of the study will inform protection issues, especially for girls and women.

Education

Schools are on closed for mid-year holidays until the fourth week of September.