

UNICEF SOMALIA MONTHLY BULLETIN

UNITE FOR CHILDREN

Volume 1, Issue 1

January 2008

A word from the UNICEF Representative

Dear Friends, Partners and Colleagues,

In the past few months, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Somalia has increased from 1.5 million (when we made our appeal for funds) to close to two million today.



Although funding against our 2007 appeal was very generous, we have had **no contributions against our 2008 appeal. And yet, shortfalls in funding will have a devastating impact on our ability to save lives.**

We need at least US \$ 5.8 million within the coming weeks **to treat children at risk of dying from malnutrition** – these funds will keep 110 partner-operated feeding centres open and functional; thereby reaching an average of 15,000 acutely malnourished children per month.

Without this immediate funding, at least half of the existing feeding centres will have to close down in March, at a time when we should be increasing coverage. (*Generous humanitarian funding in 2007 enabled us to ensure enough nutrition supplies through March 2008.*)

In addition, to prevent deaths from diarrhoeal disease and cholera outbreaks, **UNICEF needs at least US \$ 3.1 million for hygiene**

promotion, water trucking, chlorination and hygiene promotion, and construction/repairs of water supply systems for 200,000+ internally displaced persons along the Afgoye corridor. This is urgently needed to ensure continuity of safe water supplies until the end of May. (*Generous humanitarian funding in 2007 enabled UNICEF to initiate short-term life saving measures based on water trucking and chlorination of water supplies, but only into March 2008*)

To protect Somali children and women from increasing incidences of severe violence, abuse and exploitation associated with conflict and displacement, UNICEF also urgently requires US \$ 750,000.

Please don't forget the children of Somalia.

Christian

UNICEF in Somalia contributes to meeting Millennium Development Goals and Millennium Declaration Targets by increasing access to and the quality of basic services for accelerated child survival, development and protection.

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Community Mobilization for Cholera Prevention

As over 30,000 people were affected by cholera last year, UNICEF and its partners are on high alert to avert if possible, and contain any outbreaks during this year's cholera season. Towards this end, UNICEF supported religious, women's and youth groups to organize community mobilization activities in Jowhar for cholera prevention. The groups

conducted their first meeting on the 29th January and discussed how they would proceed to ensure that IDPs were aware of the dangers of poor hygiene and sanitation.

The Regional Polio Adviser supervising polio campaign in Hargeisa



Immunizing children against Polio in the North-West

Last year, through the generous support of the US Centres for Disease Control, UNICEF and its partners succeeded in vaccinating over 1.6 million children against polio – enabling Somalia to remain polio free since April 2007. This year, the 1st round of National Immuni-

zation Days (NIDs) began on January 28th – 30th, and succeeded in reaching 450,000 children under the age of five with the polio vaccine in the north-west of the country. More than 1800 vaccinators were engaged in Somaliland along with 23 vehicles mounted with public

address systems that went all around the region to ensure that all families knew about the NIDs. Reports have yet to come in from the rest of Somalia, but the next round of NIDs begins on March 3, 2008.

Improving Access and Quality of Health Care in Somaliland

As part of its efforts to ensure better quality health care in Somaliland, joint Ministry of Health and UNICEF teams visited 19 maternal and child health centres and 20 health posts in the Galbeed re-

gion. 95% of the facilities they visited had necessary life saving supplies, including drugs, vaccines, ORS and micro-nutrient supplementation items. Twenty new health posts were also established in

the Galbeed and Hargeisa regions benefiting 30,000 people.

ACCELERATING CHILD SURVIVAL

95% of children under one in Somalia have not received the full recommended course of vaccinations. One in eight children dies before his/her fifth birthday. Somalia has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.

UNICEF and WHO work with government and NGO partners to improve young child survival by increasing access to and the quality of health centres through vaccination, nutrition and malaria

USAID Helps to Rebuild Schools

Through a generous grant from USAID, UNICEF is rehabilitating 13 schools in the Bay and Bakool regions of southern Somalia and will soon be installing another 10 tented schools for displaced children in the same regions. USAID has already helped finance the installation of 12 school tents (8 in Bakool and 4 in Bay), enabling 1,488 children,

of whom 565 are girls, to go to school.



THE GO TO SCHOOL PROGRAMME

Only 30% of children in Somalia attend primary school. Enrolment of marginalized children especially girls and those from nomadic communities is a challenge. UNICEF collaborates with government and civil society organizations to increase access to and the quality of primary education. Amongst other initiatives, we train teachers, provide

DFID Supports Sustainable Capacity Development

In a first for funding to educational capacity development, UNICEF received a generous grant from DFID to build and renew Somalia's education system.

This grant will ensure that the strengthening of central, regional and district

education systems is implemented in a coordinated manner. In addition, during the first half of 2008, UNICEF will use DFID funds to translate key minimum standard documents into Somali, strengthen women's networks to promote girls' education and expand the

Child to Child programme, which uses School Clubs to create a child friendly learning environment.

"My name is Muuna Maxamud Muuse. I am 11 years old. I live near my friend, Badra Cabdi Xuseen, who is 13 in the Statehouse IDP camp in Hargeisa. People from households close to our school were dumping their rubbish just outside our tented school. We started a campaign against this and informed the community by talking to them, by approaching our Head Teacher and other important persons. We also made posters. Today, everybody understands how unhealthy this garbage is and no one dumps it in front of our school anymore."

Both Muuna and Badra are members of the UNICEF sponsored Child-to-Child Clubs.

THE COMMUNICATION, HIV/AIDS, EMPOWERMENT AND PROTECTION PROGRAMME

Children in Somalia live in one of the most vulnerable environments in the world. UNICEF protects children, empowers communities, advocates for social and behavioural change and reduces HIV risks. We also work with decision-makers to promote policy and institutional change for a more protective environment for children,

International Day for Zero Tolerance of FGM

98% of all women in Somalia between the ages of 15-49 years report undergoing some form of genital mutilation or cutting, the majority having undergone this severest form of the practice. The side effects of FGM are vast and not limited to physical damage. Some of the more serious effects include permanent emotional damage, infertility, haem-

orrhage, psychological disorders, complications in childbirth and even death.

On February 6, 2008 Hargeisa commemorated the International Day of Zero Tolerance of FGM during a ceremony organized by the Ministry of Family Welfare and Social Development. High level officials attended the commemoration, which was an occa-

sion to remind everyone of the good work being done by TOSTAN to end the practice (please read story below).

Halting Mutilations with Community Empowerment

By Christine Kapka

Hargeisa, Somaliland, - Farah was only nine years old when they came for her. There were four of them. Each one held her down as the cutter came for her.

"I remember seeing that the knife was dirty," she said. "And I remember the pain. I can't forget that. The woman cut me as I screamed and cried, calling for my mother."

When the cutter was finished she turned to the next job of ensuring little Farah's chastity; sewing her vagina closed.

"Our village had no proper needle or sewing instruments at that time," said

Farah. "So they used the thorns from an Acacia tree to close me up. Then they closed my legs and tied a rope tightly around them from the top of my thighs down to my feet, binding my legs together. Then they laid me prostrate for seven days. I couldn't move. When they unwrapped my legs I was permanently closed in my private area except for a very tiny hole."

"After the cutting I had physical problems for years," said Farah. "My kidneys pained me all the time and I had constant internal infections. I was always sick. A few years after I was cut I got married. On my wedding night they cut me open and I

was forced to have sex. I've had fourteen pregnancies, but nine have died in my womb."

Sarah, an older resident, remembers when her neighbour's daughter was cut.

"Her name is Luul and she's 11 now but was only 8 years old at the time. She was so little and there was no anaesthesia you understand. We don't have that. There was just the brute strength of people to hold the girl down and hold her legs apart. After they cut her she began to bleed, but the bleeding would not stop. She bled for seven days and I did not think she would live.

Halting Mutilations with Community Empowerment

No one in the village thought she would live. But she did, though she was never the same.”

Alive but not well is how Luul lives today. Suffering from psychological disorders and a myriad of physical ailments and infections, she's become thin and sickly and rarely smiles. “I decided after seeing that incident that no good could ever come from cutting my children and vowed never to cut my daughters. And I never did,” said Sara.

Changing attitudes towards harmful and degrading practices is a labour of love for Tostan, a UNICEF funded agency that provides rural communities with human rights empowerment programs and gets people thinking about personal rights and safety through their non-formal basic education program. This covers good governance and democracy, human rights and responsibilities, problem-solving, hygiene and health – in the hope that this will allow communities to collectively abandon harmful traditional practices. The Tostan program does not seek to merely provide messages and information or impose

ideas on participants, but rather promote, through each session, the development and use of critical thinking skills leading to a decision-making process that involves all members of the community. This program is being piloted in 42 villages across Somalia with funding from the Swiss National Committee for UNICEF.

“We've tried just about everything to stop the practice of FGM,” said Ahmed Mah, a UNICEF Project Officer. “There have even been people who have paid cutters to not perform FGM, but the demand is so strong that others always come. Also, you have to realize that the pressure of society for cutting is very strong. We had a case of a mother not performing FGM on her three daughters. These girls were teased and harassed and accused of not being pure by their classmates. The three girls begged their mother for the procedure until she had a nurse anes-

thetize them and then told them they had been cut, even though they had not. Now there's no more harassment. We've learned a lot about changing harmful practices in this culture. Today, we provide communities with the ability to come up with the idea of halting FGM themselves. And it works.”

“UNICEF gave us the tools to learn to solve these issues by ourselves,” said Deqa, a village resident. “They have taught us about human rights and dignity and that we all have a right to be healthy in mind and body. We now realize that cutting hurts our bodies and our minds and that of our children. So we have stopped the practice of FGM in our village.”

Farah



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Community Symposium on Child Soldiers

Through support from UNICEF, the Women and Child Care Organization of Jowhar organized a symposium to provide communities with a forum to talk about the harmful effect of armed conflict on children. Organisers stressed the obligations of parents in this regard and were boosted in their efforts by the attendance of the religious scholars and the Jowhar District Commissioner, Osman Aqil (*photo on right*)

who actively participated in the meeting and promised that the Middle Shabelle Administration was committed to ensuring that children were not recruited in local militias.



We are on web!!!
Find us at : www.unicef.org/somalia

Promoting Justice for Children

In order to ensure that police, judges, prosecutors, custodial corps, and child protection advocates work for children who need justice, two regional Justice for Children Committees have been created in Burao (Togdheer) and Borama (Awdal) in Somaliland. The creation of these committees will enable these actors to work in coordination with each other, in the best interests of the child.

My name is Suuldan Abdi Cayse. I am 17 years old and I live in Somaliland. When our school club identified FGM as a problem amongst the girls, we tried to find out more about this issue. We realized that people don't know how dangerous this practice can be, so we decided to talk with our families. I, myself, decided to ask my parents not to circumcise my sister Nimo. She is nine years old. Initially my parents thought that it wasn't my business, but then they listened. In the end, they decided not to circumcise her.

Suuldan is a member of the UNICEF sponsored Child-to-Child Clubs.