

SOMALIA SUPPORT CENTRE NOVEMBER 2007 NEWSLETTER

UNICEF in Somalia contributes to meeting Millennium Development Goals by increasing access to basic services for accelerated child survival and development.

**A Word
from the
UNICEF
Representative,
Christian
Balslev
Olesen**



With the ever-deteriorating security situation in Mogadishu, UNICEF remains extremely concerned about the safety and well-being of women and children fleeing the capital as well as those who remain in Mogadishu.

Particularly along the Afgoye corridor where many of these people have fled, children and their families require not only shelter, food and water, but a safe environment to be protected from harm and to continue to learn.

UN estimates indicate that with the new arrivals in Afgoye, the number of IDPs in the corridor is over 200,000 – with children under five numbering 47,600.

I would like to call attention to the fact that while we continue to deliver humanitarian assistance as best we can with the generous support of our donors; UNICEF **needs continued donor support to fill critical funding gaps in**

water supply, the integrated management of malnutrition and the creation of child-friendly spaces for children.

Please feel free to contact me for further details and thank you for your continued support for the children of Somalia.

Christian

The CRC Turns 18

On November 20th, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) turned 18. Somalia and the United States are the only two countries in the world who have not yet ratified this convention. A generation of Somali children has grown up not even knowing what it means to have a government, a national education system, clean water or protection.

Fortunately, these children still have a voice:

My name is Ibrahim Sheikh. I am 14 years old. I live in this camp for IDPs in Jowhar. We had to leave Mogadishu when my mother died.

“The children in the world have got a lot of entertainment and rights,

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but we do not have similar rights.”

“My name is Yasin Mohamed Ali, I am 13 years old. My family and I had to flee violence in Mogadishu – that is why we came to this IDP Camp. I would like to play football, like other children in the world who enjoy their life and get things to play with. We always have to think about what we will eat.”

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 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 through vaccination, nutrition and malaria prevention programmes, while also increasing access and the quality of health centres providing appropriate maternal and child health services.

Promoting Child Health Days in Somaliland

Last month, more than 4,200 children under the age of five in 35 villages of five districts of Somaliland received measles, polio and tetanus vaccines, iron and Vitamin A supplementation as well as insecticide treated bed nets. An additional 461,000 children aged 2-5 and 4,000 school children were “dewormed.”

Preventing Deaths from Measles along the Afgoye Corridor

For IDP children along the Afgoye-Mogadishu Road, UNICEF helped

organize a measles campaign from 20 - 27 October 2007, which provided 86,598 children between the ages of 9 months and 15 years with protection from measles.



Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition

Results of a Food Security Analysis Unit nutrition assessment conducted in early November amongst the Shabelle rural agropastoral and IDP populations in Afgoye and Merka indicated continuing high rates of severe acute malnutrition. UNICEF continues to support the integrated management of acute malnutrition by supporting Muslim Aid-UK to implement two out-patient therapeutic feeding centres with active case-finding and referral.

Providing Clean Water, Adequate Sanitation and Promoting Hygiene Awareness to IDPs displaced in the Afgoye Corridor

To ensure the delivery of clean water, UNICEF has provided 10 water bladders (each with 10,000 liter capacity) and is trucking in water on a daily basis to serve 70,000 people, whilst also supporting on-going work to extend the water pipeline by 10 kilometres, construct 2 water reservoirs and 20 water kiosks. In addition, to improve the quality of existing water, UNICEF has distributed 10,000 aquatabs to the same 70,000 IDPs. Hygiene promotion and the

construction of 1,000 latrines for these same IDPs is also ongoing – with 100 latrines completed through NGO partners - SRCS and SOPHPA. DRC is constructing an additional 600 latrines and hand washing facilities. These activities are being complemented by the provision of soap, sanitation tools, the training of hygiene promoters and water committee members and the implementation of clean up campaigns.

The Go to School Programme

Only 30% of children in Somalia attend primary school. UNICEF collaborates with government and civil society organizations to increase access to and the quality of primary education through teacher training and incentive programmes and the provision of adequate learning spaces and school supplies.

Children Getting Children to School

Thirty children from UNICEF’s Child-to-Child network in Jowhar launched an initiative to get children from riverine populations and IDP camps into school. Children visited homes and registered all school age children as well as tracked school drop outs. They held peer group discussions with their out of school counterparts to enrol at schools. In a push to get the message out, children also participated in drama programmes on the radio as well



as mounted loud speakers on vehicles to sensitize communities on importance of education.

Child-friendly Spaces

UNICEF has provided some 130 classroom tents for children affected by floods, drought and displacement across north and south Somalia.

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, while working with decision-makers to promote policy and institutional change for a more protective environment for children,

Protecting Children **Reuniting Children**

One of UNICEF's key activities to protect children includes tracing and reuniting separated children from their families. This past month alone, with HAPO-CHILD, UNICEF helped to reunite six children aged 9-12 years with their families in the Hiran region.

Promoting Children's Rights through the Media



In Southern Somalia, UNICEF helped organize a training of thirty

journalists from Bay, Banadir, Lower and Middle Shabelle, Lower Jubba and Gedo to discuss the role and standards for journalists in protecting and promoting children's rights.

Feature Story: Helping Others Live with AIDS

Hargeisa, Somaliland: It was on his deathbed that Ibrahim confessed to his wife that he had AIDS. "My husband's last words to me were that he had a disease and that he had passed it on to me. My three children and I have been struggling to stay alive ever since," said Fatima.*

Fatima is a 35 year old woman who is living with AIDS in a country where the disease is said, by many of its inhabitants, not to exist. Following the death of her husband, Fatima fell ill and tried in vain to get a diagnosis from doctors in her small town. Even after several tests no doctor would commit to an answer.

"A few years back, and sometimes even now, doctors would not tell people that their tests were positive," said Hussein Osman, UNICEF Project Assistant. "Many times it is not considered a Muslim disease and doctors fear recrimination from patients if they tell them they have contracted HIV."

After one year, Fatima was diagnosed as HIV-positive and prescribed ART medication, provided by the Global Fund HIV Somalia Grant.

"When my family found out I was HIV positive, they abandoned me and my three children," said Fatima. "I had nowhere to go and no one to turn to. This was the reason I came forward. If I did not,

my children and I would probably be dead."

Stigmatized by her friends and abandoned by her family, it was then that Fatima discovered UNICEF's Woman to Woman Initiative on HIV and AIDS. This initiative, principally funded by the Danish Government is the first systematic effort to provide women with a safe space to learn about HIV prevention, and care and support in an informal manner. Somali women teach the class and become mentors that reach out to educate others about HIV prevention as well as help others who are living with HIV or who are affected by AIDS

"Until I went to the classes, I had no idea about AIDS, how HIV was spread or what to do about how sick I was," said Fatima. "I started going to *Woman to Woman* meetings once a week and found that there were other women like me who were scared and had nowhere to go. Eventually I became a facilitator and now I get to help women just as I was helped. I even get paid a salary. These days I help women go to the hospital, facilitate meetings to educate women about HIV and try to help reduce the stigma that comes with this disease. I also help women to know they are good people even though they are sick."

Initial results from a survey in Somalia indicate that the AIDS epidemic is spreading amongst the general population and, in particular, among populations most at risk. This means the effort to reduce the transmission of HIV, especially among women and young people who are most vulnerable, must be intensified.

"Women need access to correct information, treatment, care and support; and communities need to

know that you can have HIV and not die from it immediately” said Hassan Ali, HIV Officer for UNICEF. “This greatly helps those who are afraid to come forward.”

*Story researched and written by
Christine Kapka*

DID YOU KNOW?

That is costs only US\$ 10/per person/per year to reach 3 million Somali infants, children under five and women of child bearing age with a key set of critical life saving interventions?

Contact Us

If you would like to learn more about our programmes or where your support would make a difference, please contact:

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