

A Word from the UNICEF Representative

In one of the recent shocking incidents in Modagishu, seven children died in battles between anti-government elements and Ethiopian troops; five as they were fleeing from school and two while they were playing football on a public pitch. UNICEF is deeply concerned about the impact of escalating violence on the lives of children in Somalia. The current environment of conflict, displacement and insecurity also has a seriously negative impact on children's and young people's long-term psychosocial welfare and healthy development.

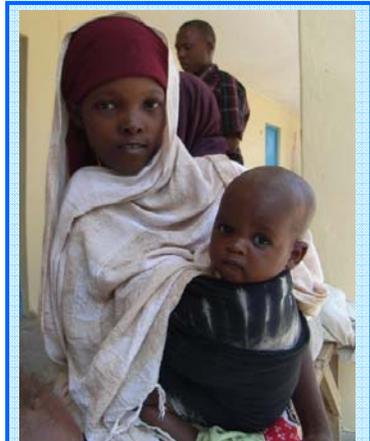
Additionally, over the past few weeks, fighting intensified in Belet Weyne in Hiran region, causing the displacement of over 70,000 people. Residents of Belet Weyne and the IDP (internally displaced persons) communities are in urgent need of food, water, health service and shelter. In these and other conflict scenarios, children are the first to pay the high price. UNICEF calls on all parties involved in the conflict to respect international humanitarian law, safeguard the rights of children, and prioritize their welfare and safety.

On the other hand, rates of acute malnutrition remain high, a situation further compounded by the deteriorating security condition in the country. According to a new survey conducted by the Food Security Analysis Unit in Somalia, it is estimated that nearly 180,000 children in Somalia are acutely malnourished, among which 26,000 are severely malnourished. This is an 11% increase in the last six months.

With Somalia facing its worst humanitarian crisis since the early nineties, UNICEF— in close partnership with other UN agencies and NGOs, and with the generous support of its donors— is building up its capacity to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs and to ensure that children's rights and needs are put first.

Christian

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Meeting the Millennium Development Goals in Somalia remains a daunting task. With focus on MDGs 4 and 5, UNICEF in Somalia contributes to increasing access to and the quality of basic services for accelerated child survival, development and protection.

UNICEF and Partners Deliver Life-Saving Nutritional Services for Somali Children

24 July 2008 : While security conditions continue to deteriorate in Somalia, UNICEF and partners completed the second round of distributing UNIMIX- a food supplement rich with vitamins and minerals- to 54,000 under-five children in the IDP (internally displaced persons) camps of Afgoye Corridor and Mogadishu.

UNICEF has scaled up its nutrition interventions to reach more children with quality services. Afgoye hosts one of the biggest IDP settlements in the world with a displaced population exceeding 300,000 people. Analyses indicate that the nutrition situation in Afgoye is critical, further complicated by the limited access for humanitarian agencies due to the security situation.

This latest round of the UNIMIX distribution had expanded its coverage to include three IDP camps located inside Mogadishu- in addition to the IDP camps in Afgoye. In Jowhar, where an estimated 4,000 IDPs are located, UNICEF supports the daily distribution of cooked supplementary food targeting 600 under-five children.

Northern parts of Somalia are also hit hard by the deteriorating nutrition conditions. The urban poor and IDPs are the most vulnerable. Starting in August, UNICEF and partners will provide rations of UNIMIX (10 kg a month per child) to approximately 7,500 under-five children in Bossaso IDP camps, as well as to children in Garowe and Galkayo IDP camps.

In addition to the blanket feeding, UNICEF supports the treatment of moderately and severely malnourished children throughout Somalia, through 79 supplementary feeding programmes, 133 outpatient therapeutic programmes, and 20 stabilization centres and therapeutic feeding centres.



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National Immunization Days Help Maintain Somalia Polio-Free

9 July 2008, Hargeisa, Somaliland:

UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and local authorities conducted this year's third round of the Polio National Immunization Days (NIDs) campaign in Somalia during July targeting a total of 1.8 million under-five children.

In Somaliland, the campaign targeted about 400,000 children. "During the campaign, each team composed of two vaccinators goes from house to house in its designated neighbourhood," explains Semsem Eissa, a vaccinator in the Campaign. "I carry the ice-box filled with the vaccines and walk with my colleague from very early in the morning. In general people are welcoming of us."

The nation-wide campaign aims at maintaining Somalia polio-free. Thanks to intensified campaigns during 2007 and 2008, no new cases have been reported since March 2007. The fourth- and last round this year is planned to be held in August. The campaign targets all under-five children in Somalia despite the increasing insecurity in the Central and Southern parts of the country.

UNICEF supports NIDs through the provision of supplies (such as vaccines and cold-chain equipment) and supporting social mobilization campaigns.

This round of the NIDs campaign for polio was combined with the provision of Vitamin-A supplementation for children aged six month– five years. Vitamin-A deficiency can cause serious symptoms for children such as blindness and compromised immunity. Benefiting from the Polio campaign's wide outreach, this simple and low cost intervention prevents serious problems that can undermine a child's survival and development.



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Semsem Eissa, one of the NID vaccinators, writing with a chalk on a door. Vaccinators go house-to-house, marking doors with the date, number of under-five children in the household, and number of children immunized.

Community Mobilization Strengthens Polio Immunization Coverage

14 July 2008, Baidoa, Bay Region and Hargeisa, Galbeed Region:

Social mobilization is a fundamental part of the Polio NIDs campaign. UNICEF, prior to and during the campaign, conducts social mobilization activities in order to pave the way for a smooth and wide immunization coverage. Awareness activities include media campaigns and advocacy among influential members of communities.

In Baidoa, prior to the NIDs campaign which took place from 15 to 17 July, UNICEF organized a meeting for about 80 people including community elders, local leaders and Koranic school teachers.

Participants discussed the current situation of polio in Somalia and the importance of keeping the country polio-free as it has been since March 2007. The aim of the meeting was to mobilize key figures in communities so that they can play an important role in creating awareness about Polio vaccination.

"We had the chance to share our views in the meeting and I think it is important that we convey knowledge to our communities as this would help change minds of people who are opposed to vaccination," said Malak Abdurrahman Tubey, a leader from Baidoa. "We have the responsibility to protect our communities so we are committed to supporting the campaign."

In Somaliland, Northwest Somalia, an intensive awareness campaign was also conducted, with focus on districts that showed high refusal rates in past rounds of the Polio NIDs.



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"Normally, false rumors and the lack of accurate information are the main reasons why some families refuse vaccination, and this is why our awareness-raising efforts are extremely important", said Awil Haji Ali, UNICEF Health Officer in the Northwest Zonal Office. "We intensified our efforts in areas where refusals were high, and mobilized religious leaders, the media, youth and women's groups, and we were supported by people who have been affected by Polio. This has resulted in the decrease of refusal rates. For instance during the NIDs round held in March 2008, the refusal rate had dropped by 85% in Burao." added Ali.

"This vaccine is good for my son to protect him from paralysis" said Hawa Abdi, whose 3 year-old son, Abdel-Rahman, had just been vaccinated. "I learned about the dangers of the disease and about the immunization campaign through television and radio. Also I heard about Polio from the people who came to talk to us." said Hawa.

Preparations Underway for the Child Health Days

UNICEF and WHO held a planning meeting from 28-30 July in Hargeisa, Somaliland, for the Child Health Days (CHDs). The first CHDs are scheduled for October/ November 2008 under the joint programme for accelerated young child survival, to provide a package of high-impact interventions for children and women in Somalia. The package includes measles vaccination, deworming, vitamin A, and ORS for under-five children and tetanus toxoid vaccination for women of child-bearing age.

UNICEF Responds to the Ongoing Emergency in Belet Weyne

Fighting intensified during July in Belet weyne town (Hiran Region) between anti-government elements and the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF), particularly when ENDF conducted artillery barrages on the town. Massive displacement, civilian casualties and destruction of property have been caused by the recent conflict, with more than 70,000 persons estimated to remain displaced from Belet weyne by the end of July. Food, water, health services and shelter are among the urgent needs of the residents of Belet weyne and IDP communities as assessed by humanitarian organisations.

UNICEF – in cooperation with its various partners- is currently providing humanitarian assistance to the communities in Belet weyne town and its surrounding areas as well as people who have been displaced. The following activities with partners are ongoing:

Health and Nutrition:

- Treatment of 1000 moderately and severely malnourished children per month through five supplementary feeding programmes and four outpatient therapeutic centres in Belet Weyne and its surrounding towns.
- Distribution of BP5 food-supplement biscuits for 15,000 under-five children.
- Provision of supplies for five Maternal and Child Health

(MCH) Centres and 31 health posts serving approximately 200,000 people.

- Immunization of 12,000 children against Measles through an accelerated immunization campaign.

Water, Sanitation and hygiene:

- Prevention of Acute Watery Diarrhea through the chlorination of water supplies at the source and at the point of use.
- Distribution of soap, jerry cans and intensified hygiene and sanitation promotion targeting 100,000 people.

Child Protection:

- Conducting a rapid assessment on the child protection situation in Belet Weyne and the situation of unaccompanied children.
- Provision of five child friendly spaces and the implementation of HIV prevention activities.

Education:

- Providing school supplies for 12,700 children and 510 teachers for the new school year starting in September and carrying out social mobilization on school resumption. UNICEF also supports enhancing the capacity of school teachers. Assessment of education needs gap is also ongoing by UNICEF's partners.

A Community Gathers to Learn About the Harms of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

July 13, 2008: Geddele, Somaliland: Residents of Geddele gathered on the grounds of the community centre to discuss the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). The Community Management Committee of Geddele organized this event to raise awareness on the negative impacts that FGM/C has on girls' and women's health and the human rights violations involved in this harmful practice. Women, men, adolescents and children participated in the event.

98% of women aged 15-49 in Somalia have been subjected to some form of FGM/C.

Since 2007, with UNICEF's support and in cooperation with the communities themselves, Tostan– an international NGO- has been implementing an awareness programme in 42 communities across Somalia. Through the programme, participants learn about human rights and responsibilities and they themselves take part in monitoring violations related to FGM/C in their communities. In Geddele, participants of this programme have been visiting and discussing with their relatives and neighbours, based on the information they have received during the awareness sessions.

Sheikh Mohamed Ibrahim, a respected local religious leader who attended the event, emphasized that this practice has



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no basis in Islam and was not mentioned in the Qoran, explaining that Islam does not tolerate any practice that results in physical or mental pain to human beings.

A local midwife, Saynab Cumar Abdilahi, was also there to share her experience and knowledge. Urging present mothers not to put their daughters through this harmful practice, she said: "This practice affects every stage of a woman's life and has extremely negative effects. For example, during childbirth, a woman who has undergone FGM/C

suffers more pain than a woman who hasn't. There are also other dangers like infections, and even death".

The chairperson of SOCSA, a local NGO participating in this programme, Khadra Kalil, addressed men who were present. "For FGM/C to be abandoned, husbands' support to their wives and daughters is crucial. In the past, it was because of fear of rendering their daughters unmarried that mothers have had their daughters circumcised, but it is important to know that an uncircumcised girl is worth just as much as a circumcised girl".

This special event has brought the community together to openly discuss a once taboo subject, creating a space for people to share information and views.

Quality Services at Local Health Facilities Boost Community Health in Somalia

By Iman Morooka
July 2008, Gabilay town, Somaliland:

60 kilometers west of Hargeisa, the capital city of Somaliland, the town of Gabilay's Maternal and Child Health (MCH) care centre is filled every morning with women and their children, while the staff are busy attending them and getting on with their normal duties of registration, conducting health awareness sessions, check-ups, and vaccination.

Safia, a mother of two, holds her ten month-old girl, Ladna, as she gets vaccinated against DPT3 and Measles. A frequent visitor of the MCH, Safia says "I came here when I was pregnant, and I also come for vaccination and whenever the children are sick. I feel confident now that my daughter was vaccinated against diseases". As she walks out of the room, the nurse reminds her of when to come for the next dose of vaccine.

Another mother comes with her ten month-old baby girl, Samira, and right away, the nurse notices that the girl is considerably underweight for her age. Not being breastfed has affected her development. Asha Abdiali, the head nurse and team leader in the MCH, weighs Samira and gives the mother advice on proper feeding and puts the girl under close monitoring.

The team in the Gabilay MCH is comprised of four qualified technical staff members: two nurses of whom one is the team leader, a pharmacist and a vaccinator. Together they serve a population of 13,000, covering Gabilay town and the surrounding villages.

UNICEF is the main provider of vaccines for the six vaccine preventable diseases, essential drugs, basic equipment and renewable supplies such as syringes and gloves, supporting 246 MCHs and 500 Health Posts across Somalia (90% of all MCH and Health Post facilities in the country).

"We are equipped here with two refrigerators for storing vaccines and medicines, plenty of doses of vaccines and supplies of medicine. We also have the



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A baby is being vaccinated at Gabilay Maternal and Child Health Centre in Somaliland

ice-boxes that we use for house-to-house visits during the National Immunization Days", said Asha, team leader at Gabilay MCH. "On a daily basis, we attend to approximately 25 under-five children and ante-natal cases at our MCH".

Where one out of every seven children die before the age of five, the situation is further worsened by the low standards or the lack of health and other basic services as well as the ongoing conflicts in different parts of the country. Aiming to help prevent deadly diseases, UNICEF- with the support of its donors- makes sure that existing primary health care facilities provide free and quality services to children and mothers through the provision of necessary supplies such as vaccines and cold-chain equipment, as well as technical support to the care providers.

"Gabilay is one of the model MCHs in Somalia, responding to the needs of the community and disseminating health related messages", said Awil Haji Ali, Health Officer in the Northwest Zone of UNICEF in Somalia. "A new dispatch of supplies coming in, thanks to a recent generous contribution from the Japanese Government of US\$ 4 million, will further enhance our ability to support health facilities across Somalia. It will also boost our outreach health services including immunization campaigns, mobile health clinics and the Child Health Day Campaign", added

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