

# UNICEF SOMALIA MONTHLY BULLETIN

UNITE FOR CHILDREN

Volume 1, Issue 3

March 2008

## A word from the UNICEF Representative

There is need for concerted efforts to ensure that Somalis have access to sanitary means of excreta disposal as well as access to clean drinking water. Even with support from the international community, it is crucial that improved sanitation becomes the responsibility of each and every household in Somalia. Currently only about 37 per cent of households use sanitary means of excreta disposal.

Adequate sanitation enhances dignity, privacy and safety, for women and girls and schools with decent toilet facilities enable children, especially girls reaching puberty, to remain in the educational system. On the other hand, lack of toilets makes women and girls vulnerable to violence if they are forced to defecate only after nightfall and in secluded areas. Just having sanitation and safely disposing of children's faeces alone reduces the number of diarrhoeal cases by nearly 40%. In Somalia one in 35 children under five years dies from diarrhoea.

Increasing access to sanitation in particular requires building upon parents' primary responsibilities to their families. Good sanitation doesn't mean expensive sanitation. A very simple pit latrine is as good as a flush toilet. Just practising handwashing at critical times such as before preparing food and after defecation can reduce the number of diarrhoeal cases by 35%.

In emergencies, including diarrhoea outbreaks, UNICEF plays a vital role in enhancing the provision of health, water, sanitation and hygiene services that are critical in containing diseases. Through UNICEF initiatives, activities such as hygiene promotion take place in schools, health facilities, and in the community - particularly in IDP camps.

Across Somalia, UNICEF (with generous funding from the European Commission and the Governments of Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden, Canada and the United States amongst others) supports local administrations and civil society actors to put in place policies and measures to ensure and



© UNICEF Somalia/2007/M, Warfa

*People queue for water in ex-Mogadishu stadium camp along the Mogadishu-Afgoye road. UNICEF provided support for water trucking and installation of emergency water piping facilities in many camps.*

sustain future water supply and management, as well as provide technical assistance and funding for the construction of water and sanitation facilities in schools and health centers. This support is highly appreciated even as UNICEF calls for more to be done.

*Christian*

Christian Balslev-Olesen

**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.**

## IN THIS ISSUE

Emergency	2
Education gets a boost	3
Malaria control gears up to challenge	4
How one young girl is saving lives in Puntland	5
Youth magazine gives hope and education	6
Somaliland passes children's Bill	7
UNICEF donates supplies	8
Women's Day marked	8

## 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 prevention programmes.**

## Emergency - Centre helps curb malnutrition

By Misbah Sheikh

JOWHAR, Somalia, 6 March 2008 – Following heavy fighting in Mogadishu, Mumino Hussein Nuur, 32, fled her home and came to the Kalagooye Camp for displaced people in Jowhar. She brought her three young children – Hussein, Fatuma and four-year-old Mohammed.

When Nutrition Coordinator for UNICEF Somalia James King'ori first saw Mohammed in late 2007, the boy was suffering from diarrhoea, anaemia and oedema – a condition that causes excessive fluid to accumulate in the body.

Recognizing these signs, Mr. King'ori immediately referred him to a local treatment centre for severely malnourished children managed by the Italian non-governmental organization INTERSOS in partnership with UNICEF.

### Healthy again

At the centre, specialists provided Mohammed with medication and therapeutic feeding for four weeks until his oedema disappeared and he had returned to his target weight.

Two months later, Mohammed is healthy and back with his mother and siblings.

Mohammed's mother is happy to have her son back alive and healthy, but she fears she will not be able to continue to give him the food that he requires. "When we lived in Mogadishu, I earned \$4 per day doing casual labor, like cleaning houses," she said. "Now I earn 80 cents each day by selling grass for animals. I can hardly buy enough to eat, let alone other things."

Most Somalis live on less than a dollar a day and, on average, live to be 47 years old.

According to a recent nutritional assessment conducted in central and southern Somalia, malnutrition levels exceed World Health Organization emergency threshold levels of 15 per cent. There are 160,000 acutely malnourished children in the country, 25,000 of whom are severely malnourished.

### Long-term response

In 2007, UNICEF launched an appeal for \$50 million for emergency life-saving interventions to help children like Mohammed achieve better health. The organization works in partnership with donors and NGOs to ensure both an immediate and long-term response to the malnutrition crisis in Somalia.

With generous donor funding, UNICEF has been able to support 110 feeding centres in the central and southern part of the country, thereby successfully rehabilitating 64,000 acutely malnourished children in 2007.

UNICEF Representative in Somalia Christian Balslev-Olesen notes that UNICEF not only works with NGOs to improve hygiene and provide basic health care and immunization, but also works in tandem with UN partners to ensure livelihood and poverty issues are addressed.

"You cannot just treat malnutrition on its own," says Mr. Balslev-Olesen. "You have to address longer term livelihood and poverty issues."



James King'ori contributed to this story.

Mohammed (above) before the therapeutic feeding and below after feeding at the centre.

Photo credit: UNICEF/2007/JKingori.



## Health

**Polio eradication:** As a part of the polio eradication programme, an immunization campaign was carried out in towns, villages, settlements and among nomads in Somaliland (Northwest Somalia). The campaign reached about 400,100 children aged under five years old. A campaign carried out in Puntland immunized about 149,000 children aged under five years. In Puntland, Vitamin A supplements were provided to 111,308 out of 134,056 children targeted for immunization. The children were aged between 6 and 59 months. The bene-

ficiaries were from four regions of Puntland - Bari, Kar-kaar, Nugal and Mudug.

**Diarrhoea:** Following cases of acute watery diarrhoea and suspected cholera in Central and Southern Somalia, UNICEF dispatched supplies of chlorine and undertook monitoring through partner organizations to prevent and control the outbreak. As part of the interventions, a total of 400 community dug wells were chlorinated.

## Education gets a welcome boost

Some 3,000 Text Books were distributed to 10 non-formal education schools in Hargeisa, Berbera and Burao in Somaliland. 1,250 children of whom 60% are girls will benefit from these books. In another development, 30 desks and 30 benches were distributed to Ahmed Dhagax Primary school in Hargeisa, Somaliland. Chalk supplies were also distributed in Sanaag region. More than 2,000 children of whom 35% are girls will benefit from these supplies.

In Central/Southern Somalia, UNICEF held talks with community elders and provided tented schools to children in Bay and Bakool regions. Learning spaces for 1,910 children in 16 schools in these regions have been of low standard and inconvenient for teaching/learning purposes.

Children were forced to learn under the shade of trees and some locally made shelters which couldn't afford

them protection against the scorching heat and rain.

A similar problem of inappropriate learning spaces affected Hawadley village of Balad district in Middle Shabelle region.

Other affected locations included Bulo-Burte and Hurshe villages in Abud-waq. In response to the need for proper shelter for learning, UNICEF started the construction of Hawadley primary school which is nearing completion.

Once complete, 230 children will no longer have to suffer from lack of shelter. Classroom tents have also been provided to Jameco-Mubarak and Hurshe schools benefiting 257 children. School supplies were also distributed in Bay, Bakool and Middle Shabelle for 17,334 children.

## Security

About nine people were killed and at least 20 others injured in inter-clan fighting over a land dispute in Galkayo, Mudug region of Puntland.

Conflict in Mogadishu and inter-clan conflict elsewhere was reported in Central and Southern Somalia. Ambushes of public transport, killings and intermittent fighting were reported in various locations. Islamist fighters briefly took control of Jowhar township, 90 kilometres (55 miles) north of Mogadishu, looted government vehicles and offices and released prisoners lodged in jail. Suspected militants also attacked Belet Weyne Prison and released several prisoners and confiscated weapons and ammunition from the police station.

## Water, sanitation and hygiene

**Water supply:** Drought continued to bite in Mudug, Nugal, Bari, Sool and Sanaag regions leading to the Puntland administration declaring the situation an emergency. Water trucking is targeting affected communities that are suffering from water scarcity and depletion of pasture. Measles and skin disease outbreaks have been reported in affected regions.

In Somaliland, Waridaad bore well was rehabilitated and is currently supplying clean water to about 3,000 nomadic families in a radius of about 20kms. The rehabilitation was carried out at a critical time when water shortages have become acute due to shortage of rains. Karuure and Afraaq borewells were also re-activated .

UNICEF rehabilitated Xingalool borehole in Sanaag region that is benefitting 5,000 people living in and around Xingalool village. Meeraysane borehole in Garowe (Puntland's administrative capital) was also connected to Nugal Water Company which runs the local water system. In Central/Southern Somalia, installation of power and pumping units for Durey borehole was effected. The installations will help serve Durey area of Qansadhere district with water benefitting 3,000 people.

Meanwhile UNICEF continued its provision of drinking water and hygiene promotion to internally displaced persons within the Mogadishu – Afgoye corridor. Plans are underway to continue water trucking activities to the displaced population and to provide additional sanitation facilities to new arrivals and drill at least two new boreholes.



As part of efforts to control malaria, UNICEF has been distributing long-lasting insecticide treated nets like the one above to protect people against the disease.

© UNICEF Somalia/2007/CKMinihane

## Malaria control in Somalia gears up to challenge

**By Robert Kihara**

With an estimated 700,000 cases annually, malaria is a major public health problem in Somalia that requires a concerted approach for effective control. Notwithstanding the challenges to disease control in a context affected by insecurity and lack of a centralised administration, efforts have been made to deal with the challenge of malaria.

“A total of 900,000 insecticide treated nets having been distributed since 2006 through support of the Global Fund Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The focus has been to distribute in the most malaria-prone areas which are found in the Central/South of the Country,” says Tanya Shewchuk, Global Fund's malaria coordinator at UNICEF Somalia.

Current support to malaria control has been part of the Global Fund's Round Six grant which aims to provide essential support for the implementation of the national malaria control strategy in Somalia. Besides the distribution of nets the support

has included introduction of new drug therapy, training of medical staff and introduction of rapid diagnostic tests to make them available at health facilities.

“Besides the nets, UNICEF has introduced artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT) which is available in maternal and child health (MCH) centres and hospitals,” says Tanya.

in an effort to better tackle the malaria problem in Somalia, UNICEF, WHO and other partner organizations including the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI)-Wellcome Trust-University of Oxford are conducting research on malaria prevalence and treatment-seeking behaviour. The research which commenced in March 2008 will inform future malaria control strategies

“A major challenge to malaria control is that people need proper diagnosis yet many self-treat on the assumption that they have malaria,” says Tanya. “Rather than being tested in public health facilities, many people use private pharmacies and other outlets. In addition to not being tested, they receive ineffective drugs against malaria such as chloroquine.”

Long-term financing from the Global Fund for five years amounting to \$25 million is going towards the control programme and is catering adequately for current activities. This year the programme hopes to train an additional 125 health workers in malaria case management and will commence the roll out of ACT provision through health posts. It will take three years to ensure all health posts are offering ACT therapy. Another goal is to distribute 250,000 nets by the end of the year.

## How one young girl is saving lives in Puntland

By *Christine Kapka*

**Bossaso, Puntland** - Fatima is far from your average teacher. She's also far from your average girl. In fact, this young woman could probably only be described as extraordinary. Merely 16 years old, Fatima Mohammed Elmi has lit a spark within her IDP community and, indeed, across her small town.

"We came after my father was killed in Mogadishu," said Fatima. "We had no food, nowhere to live and no money. There was fighting and killing everywhere. My mother decided to take us to Bossaso where it was safe. There are six of us and we all made our way here to Bossaso more than a year ago. We live here in the camp with other people who also have no home to go to or money for food. This is where I go to school and learn about health, hygiene and HIV and AIDS."

In an effort to prevent HIV infections, UNICEF's Communication, HIV, Empowerment and Protection section has created the uniquely styled programme of peer education among women, whereby motivated women and girls such as Fatima undertake educational activities with their peers. This program, the 'Women to Women Initiative on HIV', aims to ensure that vulnerable women and girls have access to correct HIV information and develop the necessary life skills to protect themselves from infection. It also encourages others to provide care and support to people living with AIDS.

So, without encouragement, Fatima wanders about her camp speaking to other girls about HIV, how it is transmitted and how to prevent contracting the virus. But HIV prevention is not all she speaks about. Fatima also talks about preventing illnesses through proper hygiene and washing.

"I like to tell people things that will help them and help improve their lives. I like to learn and to go to school and hope that more people will come to school to learn about helping the community and ways to prevent infections," said Fatima. "I hope one day to be a teacher." And although she already is, she braves a lot of negative attention for her efforts.

"Sometimes they laugh at her," said Halima

Mohamud Ahmed, a Project Coordinator for UNICEF. "She tries to tell her peers about the dangers of having unprotected sex, why they should wash their hands, why they shouldn't use other people's razors and how to avoid contracting HIV. Many simply look at her shocked and often laughing asking how can she speak openly about such 'crazy' things."

In fact, not speaking openly about AIDS is costing lives in Somalia, with countless women unknowingly infected and the numbers rising, peer education has proved to be one of the most effective methods of getting correct information out. It also allows women and girls to discuss the topic freely and ask questions where they would otherwise get no answers about issues such as HIV, STIs, gender based violence and why education for girls is important.

"There are many women and men who have HIV in Somalia," said hospital midwife Marina. "Sadly most do not even know they have the virus. Misconceptions are high, so we must continue to reach out so that more can learn about HIV and address the stigma. If more would take action like Fatima, perhaps we have a chance of preventing a decent amount of new infections and even saving lives."

Yet young Fatima is happy to educate one person at a time, slowly sharing and infusing new ideas to her friends and her community. In addition to sharing information about HIV, there have also been other results. Flu and colds have been drastically reduced in the camps largely due to the hand washing program. And three girls who have not been attending school in the IDP camp have been so intrigued by the things Fatima is sharing that they have decided to give school a chance. While it's just one girl, it demonstrates perfectly just how effective peer counseling can be when put into the right hands – that of the children.

**See Page 6 for more on HIV**

## World Water Day

World Water Day (WWD) was marked in Somaliland and elsewhere in Somalia on 22 March. Among events that took place to mark the Day in Somaliland was the official commissioning of Haraf Solar powered mini water system. The water system will serve 2,000 beneficiaries .

In Puntland the Day was marked by local authorities, NGOs, UN agencies and community groups. A ceremony was organized by Puntland State Agency for Water and Energy at the Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC) meeting hall in Garowe. More than 100 people participated in the ceremony. Among the participants were government ministries, members of parliament, private sector organizations, international organizations, UN agencies, international and national NGO's, women's groups, city councils, head teachers and youth organisations. The Puntland administration praised UNICEF's role in improving school sanitation and raising awareness through hygiene education. The Puntland Minister for Works said the administration had funded two water supply sources and together with UNICEF had funded the Awr-Bogeys borehole in Sool. The water schemes are now providing drinking water and have improved the sanitation condition of more than 10,000 inhabitants, most of whom are women and children.

In Central/Southern Somalia the Day was marked through commemorative activities organized in Baidoa, Mogadishu, Merka, Jowhar and Dhusamareb.

## 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**

## Feature Story: Youth magazine gives hope and education

*By Christine Kapka*

**Bossaso, Puntland** - Thanks to a dedicated young man in the center of Bossaso named Abdi Hassan, the list of people in Somalia who have never heard of HIV and AIDS is finally growing smaller. As a volunteer writer for the UNICEF-sponsored youth magazine 'KOOR', Abdi is an enthusiastic and innovative young man who uses various techniques such as letters to the magazine's doctor and discussion groups to help promote AIDS education and awareness. He even puts his phone number in every issue and encourages people to call him with questions.

"Our main goal is not just to inform people about HIV, it's to get people thinking about new ways to get this vital information to people all over the country," said Abdi. "There are people out there who have never even heard of AIDS. How can they protect themselves against something they don't know exists?"

KOOR, in the Somali language, is a bell made of wood and put on the most prized camel in order to find them should they wander off. Now this bell chimes to gather the youth throughout Somalia, to read, discuss and learn about the dangers of HIV.

What initially began as one small magazine shared between regions, and managed by adults, quickly expanded into 3 separate magazines, each one designed for the uniqueness of each region and now locally produced by the youth. In fact, KOOR has become so popular that in remote country areas, one magazine is shared between hundreds of young people. Discussions and questions are tossed about and letters are written. Sometimes a phone call is made.

"I remember last year getting a phone call from a young boy who was about nine years old named Salah from the town of Armo," said Abid. "He was asking so many questions about AIDS. Could he get it from a toilet seat, could it be spread through mosquitoes? It's these types of

phone calls that let me know that so much more needs to be done in the area of giving information to the public. So many people have questions out there who aren't as brave as this boy, and who need information."

Hoping to reduce the stigma that goes along with the disease, hundreds of young people rally every other month to produce a magazine that informs and invites and encourages dialogue and information sharing among young people. This has proved not only an effective education tool, but a method to help fight stigmatization and alienation of those living with



Surrounded by copies of *Koor*, the youth magazine produced with UNICEF support, one of the beneficiaries at work at the *Koor* office in Bossaso, Northeast Somalia.

*UNICEF Somalia/2007/CKMinihane*

AIDS by humanizing the disease and discussing it openly.

"Many people are treated badly and even abandoned once their status is known," said Abid. "My hope is that this magazine somehow reaches both the people who stigmatize and the people who have AIDS. The people with AIDS will know they are not alone and there are people who care and can help. And maybe the people who stigmatize will know that AIDS is not contagious and the people who have the disease need help and support. That's why I do this. To make a difference and to help. I believe this magazine does that."

## Somaliland Parliament passes children's Bill

**Bill passed:** The Lower House of the Somaliland Parliament finally passed and sent to the President for assent the Justice for Children Bill. Among others, the Bill agreed to an amendment prepared by the Guurti (Elders) House which recognizes offenders aged between 15 and 18 years as children. The president is expected to sign the Bill into law in the near future. It took about one-and-half years for the Bill to reach the current stage.

Two Regional Justice Committees in Awdal and Togdheer regions have re-constituted themselves as boards. The boards include court and legal workers, police, parents and community leaders. They will monitor the situation of children in prison. Partly as a result of their lobbying, a group of immigrants including children were released from Borama Central Police Station.

UNICEF staff visited child friendly spaces in Middle Shabelle and the Afgoye internally displaced persons' corridor in Lower Shabelle to assess the psychosocial support and care provided to children and women affected by conflict and displacement. Two such spaces were in Yaqle and Mukay Dhere villages in Balad district, serving 320 children. The spaces not only provide recreational activities but also serve as learning space where children are taught Qu'ran in the mornings and basic literacy classes in the afternoon. The spaces appear to be sustainable as the communities maintain and manage them in good shape. Another space is in Arbiska IDP camp along Afgoye corridor where 200 children aged 3 to 16 years of age from four nearby IDP camps are able to get psychosocial support through recreational activities, games, songs, drama and literacy classes. There are 20 school tents established in the Mogadishu- Afgoye corridor area with 7300 students of grade one and two.

## HIV/AIDS

**Advocacy:** We Are Women Activists (WAWA) continued to implement women to women activities to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS prevention and control in Puntland. Peer education was carried out for 578 participants who included women and young girls. Among those trained were internally displaced persons. Meanwhile, 35 representatives of water, sanitation and hygiene organizations in Central/Southern Somalia benefited from HIV/AIDS awareness raising integrated within their meeting in Baidoa.

**Deliberations:** UNICEF staff met representatives of the TFG Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs together with eight religious leaders who participated in a leadership advocacy forum in Baidoa. The meeting helped establish coordination and information-sharing between the leaders and the TFG. Among issues discussed by the two sides were reduction of stigma, care, support and treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS.

**VCT:** The Merka Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) centre continues to operate and provide anti-retroviral therapy. Since September 2006 it has provided counseling and testing services to 1380 clients.

**HIV/AIDS support group:** UNICEF staff held a meeting in Merka with Allumas HIV/AIDS support group members who support the sick and poor in hospitals. The meeting attended by VCT staff and people living with HIV from Mogadishu and Lower Shabelle was the first involving people living with HIV in Merka. Among the issues discussed were the possibility of creating economic sources of livelihood for people living with HIV and their involvement in HIV prevention and control.

The meeting was a major step towards breaking the silence and stigma associated with HIV as well as providing an opportunity for people living with HIV to interact with the support group and with each other. The people living with HIV who attended were three female and two male. One was a beneficiary of anti-retroviral therapy which had improved her condition and she encouraged her colleagues to use the drugs regularly and in a timely way as per prescription. The forum enabled the people living with HIV not only to interact with other people but also gave them a chance to share experiences with those in a similar situation.

## 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,**

## Contact Us

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

Christian Balslev Olesen  
Representative  
cbalslev@unicef.org  
+254 733 629-933

Denise Shepherd-Johnson  
Chief of Communication  
dshepherdjohnson@unicef.org  
+254 722 719 867

Robert Kihara,  
Communication Officer,  
rkihara@unicef.org  
+254 721 244 800 or  
+254 722 206 883

### UNICEF donates relief supplies

UNICEF donated relief supplies to victims of a fire outbreak in 15 May internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in Burao, Somaliland. 43 houses were destroyed. Items donated included blankets, mats, utensils and jerry cans.

A diarrhoea outbreak was reported from Dhahar district of East Sanaag region on 10 March 2008 with 22 cases and one death. UNICEF supported the local health authorities in Dhahar with essential supplies such as chlorine for treatment of drinking water and oral rehydration salts.

---

### We are on web!!!

Find us at : [www.unicef.org/somalia](http://www.unicef.org/somalia)

---

### International Women's Day marked

International Women's Day was marked through a forum in Somaliland that drew participants who included NGOs, elders, religious leaders, youth organizations (mostly male) who engaged in a serious debate on issues such as women's access to basic services particularly education and protection of girls. The women participants decried the lack of representation of women in governance and called for affirmative action to redress the situation.

In Central/Southern Somalia, UNICEF supported the celebration of International Women's Day in Jowhar, Belet Weyne, Huddur, Wajid, Baidoa and Kismayo. The commemorative events were used as an opportunity to raise awareness on education with emphasis on girls. UNICEF partners in those towns organized community mobilization sessions in which 1,200 women participated.