



WHO Somalia with the support of UN-CERF is providing hope and life-saving treatment to malnourished children by sustaining stabilization centres across Somalia. Photo credit: WHO Somalia/I.Taxta 15 November 2023, Mogadishu, Somalia – Malnutrition affects communities far and wide, weaving its way through many lives, often with devastating results. The problem is painfully evident in Somalia, a nation grappling with recurrent droughts, conflicts, and disease outbreaks, primarily in its southern regions. These emergencies have worsened malnutrition, which was already at dire levels, leading to an alarming rise in disease, death, disability, and prolonged suffering, especially among children under five years of age.

Meet Maryama¹, a mother of 9 children, whose life took a devastating turn when she lost her livestock to the relentless drought. She was left to feed for her family alone, without support from her extended family. Like many others, she was unable to find enough food for her family and would often make all of them sleep hungry. Maryama's story took a pivotal turn on 4 July 2023, when she walked into a WHO-supported Mother and Child Hospital in Heliwa district to seek help for her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Amina.

At the hospital's stabilization centre – a ward supported with essential lifesaving medical supplies by WHO with the support from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to treat children suffering with severe acute malnutrition with medical complications – the paediatric doctors, nurses and nutritionists promptly assessed Amina's health and nutritional status. Amina was diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition, compounded by a range of medical complications. Due to her frail frame, lack of appetite and skin lesions, doctors recommended immediate hospitalization of Amina.

As Maryama had to remain with her daughter, she initially hesitated to accept it, given her role as the family's sole breadwinner. It was only after the counselling from the highly skilled nutrition staff and doctors who gently guided Maryama toward making the decision to admit her child for life-saving treatment.

Life-saving treatment and care

Amina received essential medications as well as therapeutic milk to stabilize and rebuild her tissues. Slowly but surely, Amina's conditions improved. Within two weeks of her admission and continued medical treatment, she started feeding without the aid of a tube, hence she was put on a ready-to-use therapeutic food to treat her malnutrition.

Expressing gratitude Maryama said: "I thank from the depth of my heart the doctors, nurses and the staff in this hospital as well as to the WHO and the donors who made this health facility functional, because without this, I would have certainly lost my daughter. Along with the treatment of my daughter, we have been provided with 3 meals a day, food packages, a warm blanket and cleaning supplies."

"This remarkable transformation in Amina's health and well-being was made possible thanks to support and funding provided by the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). The CERF assistance enables the Mother and Child Hospital to provide life-saving treatment and care to children like Amina, ensuring they have access to medical support and a chance at a better future," said Dr Mahmud, the medical officer at the hospital. Adding he said that this hospital, thanks to the support from WHO and donors, has resumed functioning and providing life-saving services to not only locals but to the displaced people from nearby villages and districts."

A Nurse, while treating other patients at this stabilization centre informed that "When Amina arrived at the hospital, her weight was shockingly low – far below the healthy range for a child of

her age. With consistent medical care and daily nutritious feedings, Amina was discharged from the stabilization centre and transferred to an outpatient therapeutic programme at the same hospital.”

In the weeks that followed, Amina continued her journey towards full recovery as Maryama continued to bring her to the hospital for continued medical treatment. Such was the impact of Amina’s recovery that her neighbours gave her a new name, Xabaal Diid—meaning triumph over illness.

In a world often overshadowed by adversity, stories like Amina and Maryama’s remind us that hope, resilience and support can lead to brighter tomorrows. Thanks to the generosity of CERF and other donors, countless lives are being transformed and the cycle of malnutrition is being broken, one child at a time.

For additional information, please contact:

Fouzia Bano, Communications Officer, banof@who.int

Saeed Ahmed, Reporting Officer, saeahmed@who.int

Related links

<https://www.emro.who.int/somalia/news/cholera-cases-on-the-rise-in-somalia-amid-rising-displacement-of-people.html>

<https://www.emro.who.int/somalia/news/somalia-calls-for-help-as-18-million-somali-children-under-5-experience-acute-malnutrition-and-health-complications.html>

<https://www.emro.who.int/somalia/news/balancing-priorities-in-the-midst-of-a-drought-vaccination-campaigns-breaking-measles-transmission-among-children-in-somalia-and-saving-lives.html>

¹ For security reasons names of the drought-survivors and medical officers have been changed in this story

Wednesday 1st of May 2024 04:25:24 AM