

PRESS RELEASE

An innovative approach to prevent child malnutrition in Somalia using the latest generation of ready-to-use food, Plumpy'doz

Nairobi, Kenya 31 December 2008 – UNICEF has introduced a new emergency nutrition intervention to prevent malnutrition in over 100,000 of the most vulnerable children in Somalia. 'Plumpy'doz' is the latest generation of ready-to-use food designed to satisfy the nutritional needs of young children aged 6 to 36 months and supplement available food from general food distributions by partners such as the World Food Programme (WFP) as well as other traditional food sources. Three teaspoons of Plumpy'doz three times a day provides each young child with additional calories, high quality protein and all the essential minerals and vitamins required to ensure growth and boost the immune system.

Plumpy'doz is packaged in 325g pots, each one equivalent to a weekly ration for a child. Made of vegetable fat, peanut paste, sugar and milk powder Plumpy'doz is being distributed to children through functioning health facilities, mobile health teams and where possible, through Child Health Days, a joint WHO and UNICEF programme to accelerate young child survival. Once registered, children will receive this supplement for a period of eight months.

On 18 December, UNICEF and local health authorities provided Plumpy'doz to over 9,000 children living in poor urban areas and camps for internally displaced persons (IDP) in Bosasso, northeast Somalia where the highest rate of malnutrition ever in Somalia was recorded.

As of 31 December, Plumpy'doz is also being introduced to children in central and southern Somalia, where 75% of the targeted child population is located. To date, UNICEF and partners have reached over 10,000 children from 6 to 36 months in the Middle and Lower Shabelles. The next distribution will aim to reach over 40,000 children in the Afgoye IDP corridor, home to the most densely populated IDP camp in the world and critical malnutrition rates compounded by limited humanitarian access. By mid-January over 30,000 additional children in central and southern Somalia, including in Jowhar and Hiran, will be reached with the help of partners.

"This is the first time that Plumpy'doz will be distributed on such a large scale. UNICEF is working with partners to take proactive action to not only treat but *prevent* malnutrition. By adopting this new approach, we aim to reach children *before* they become malnourished. In the face of Somalia's complex humanitarian situation, using Plumpy'doz is an innovative way to assist a population at risk and at the same time address the chronic nutrition situation where 1 in 6 children is acutely malnourished at any point in time," said UNICEF Somalia Representative, Christian Balslev-Olesen. The national average prevalence of acute malnutrition in Somalia is 18.6% - above the 15% emergency threshold.

UNICEF will continue optimizing the use of Plumpy'doz to reach nutritionally vulnerable children in high-risk areas as well other areas where nutritional needs arise.

About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

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