

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SUSTAINING NUTRITION SERVICES, DURING MULTIPLE EMERGENCIES

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Galan, Oromia – 18 June 2020: Morke Edo - is a one-year-old child whose family was among those affected by devastating floods in Galana, Oromia region of Ethiopia. The floods caused displacement of more than 60,000 people, destruction of families' assets, and affecting household food security, worsening the vulnerable nutritional status of thousands of children, and leaving 8.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance across the country and 3.3 million (9 percent



Figure 1: Assessment of Morke during admission at Meteri Health Centre. @UNICEF Ethiopia/ Tajudin/ Meseret Iyaso

of the region's population) in Oromia alone (source: OCHA-HRP 2020 report). Morke, a one-year-old girl, was admitted to Meteri Health Centre's outpatient therapeutic programme (OTP) due to severe acute malnutrition, without medical complications. Her mid-upper-arm circumference (MUAC) was 10cm¹.

Additionally, the nutrition therapeutic supplies procured and delivered with financial support from Vitality International/United Kingdom (UK) National committee for UNICEF ensured adequate service provision at the health centre.

Morke's mother, Kutu, received counselling from the trained health workers on appropriate Infant and Young Children Feeding (IYCF) practices. Additional counselling on breastfeeding in the COVID-19 context and key messages on COVID-19 prevention were also provided while she had been receiving nutritional care for her sick child.

"I am delighted as my daughter received treatment that saved her life. Thanks to God, the government and the health centre for resuming its service. Back home, I will support my family and others to cascade messages on appropriate breastfeeding, prevention of COVID-19, complementary feeding, and nutritional care" said Kutu Utuba, while expressing gratitude for the treatment and care provided to her child.

The regional health bureau (RHB), in partnership with UNICEF, IOM, and GOAL, resumed the facility's basic health services. UNICEF, with the financial support from Vitality International, mobilized essential life-saving nutrition supplies, routine drugs and provided the necessary technical support.

The government and partners strengthened services during this challenging COVID -19 emergency to avert unnecessary health complications and deaths. Services were strengthened through adopting new programming modalities that were compliant in the COVID-19 era, such as social distancing, adopting guidelines to prevent spreading of the virus and promoting awareness through mass media campaigns. An important endeavor to prevent children like Morke from being

¹ MUAC below 11.5cm is a sign of severe wasting, requiring urgent treatment.

affected by Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) which every year affects over 500,000 children across Ethiopia.



Figure 2: Kutu Utuba, relieved as she observes, helps assess her recovered Child before Discharge. @UNICEF Ethiopia/ Tajudin

Key factors affecting children's nutritional status in one of the emergency prone zones of the Oromia Region include chronic fragile livelihoods, conflict and recurrent floods. UNICEF, with support from different donors will continue to provide technical support, undertake timely delivery of supplies to ensure a robust health care delivery system and improved capacity among health workers. Through efforts from donors like the Vitality International/UK National Committee for UNICEF, USAID, Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) and ECHO, more than 36 million USD has been mobilized to treat children with SAM. Failure to treat or prevent SAM in children could affect developmental prospects of the country costing up to 15 percent of the country's GDP, negatively affecting children's cognitive development and impacting school learning ability.