



Oxfam Impact

Your support at work



Fighting hunger in Mogadishu

In Somalia, Oxfam's partner SAACID is saving the lives of thousands of children.

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At the height of the drought that swept more than 13 million people across East Africa into crisis in 2011, the UN declared that six regions of Somalia had plunged into famine. Numbers define that condition: malnutrition rates higher than 30 percent, more than two people out of 10,000 dying each day, food limited to less than 2,100 calories per person per day, and access to less than four liters of water per person per day.

But what about families who have lost children to starvation? How do you tally their sadness and despair? You can't.

For Raha Janaqow, country director for SAACID, Oxfam's partner in Somalia, work is the only salve for the devastation around her—work that is saving the lives of thousands of malnourished children who have made their way to one of 14 community therapeutic care centers

SAACID operates across the conflict-ridden capital of Mogadishu.

"I have seen so much suffering, and still I weep. I no longer know where my tears come from," says Janaqow. "All we can do is keep helping as much as we can with the resources we have, and hope for a better time."

Somalia is one of the most challenging places on earth for aid workers. Civil conflict has made the country highly dangerous. In this context, Oxfam has not been able to provide direct assistance in several years and works instead through local Somali partner organizations.

Conflict combined with the food crisis has displaced more than a quarter of Somalia's population—about 1.8 million

people. Many of them now rely on organizations like SAACID, which means "help" in the local language, for their survival. Each week, approximately 3,000 children and nursing mothers have been making their way to one of SAACID's care centers, the first of which opened in 2009 with the support of Oxfam in partnership with other agencies. This year alone, the program has admitted more than 104,000 children. Oxfam's \$2.49 million commitment to the program runs to March.

Getting there: One of many challenges

For families who have decided to abandon their homes in search of help, the journey to Mogadishu—and to SAACID's services—is one of many challenges in a crisis that has robbed them of just about everything.

Fadumo's son, Mohamed, began to gain weight—and smile again—after receiving care at one of SAACID's therapeutic centers for malnourished children in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu. *Geno Teofilo / Oxfam*

One mother described the 150-mile trek she and her family undertook to reach the capital after drought killed their livestock and scorched the farm that sustained them.

Her name is Sahro and she has five children. "I was carrying my sick child on my back, while my husband was carrying another child who is older," said Sahro, whose home is in the Bay region where the UN declared famine in September. "We begged from Bay to Mogadishu, from district to district and village to village, for food and water."

Sahro's son, Ahmed, had been sick for months and had grown increasingly weak before the family struck out for the capital. Once there, Ahmed was finally able to get the care he needed thanks to SAACID.

"This nutrition center is extremely important for us," said Sahro, speaking perhaps for many Somali mothers anguishing over the health of their children. "Without it, hundreds of children would already have died from malnutrition."

Steps toward health

On any given morning at SAACID's centers, crowds of mothers and their children gather. Some have arrived for the first time while others have returned for ongoing care or follow-up visits. A standard course of treatment for malnutrition lasts about four months. SAACID staffers examine the newcomers, performing a variety of simple tests that help determine the level of care children need. SAACID immediately sends those who have medical complications to a stabilization center, which is located in a separate hospital.

"Every day we see on average 200 to 250 people," said Halima Hussein. She's a

42-year-old mother of five children who works as a nurse for SAACID in Badbaado, one of the city's larger camps for displaced people. "Some are severely malnourished. Some are moderately malnourished. ... Three or four children are dying every week in Badbaado. These are the children that I see or know about, but I think the actual cases are far higher."

The World Food Programme helps to provide the special foods children receive through SAACID. Mothers get instruction on how to feed their children, and before they leave the center they pick up two weeks' worth of therapeutic food packets, enough to cover the needs of a child until the next visit.

SAACID community outreach workers also explain the importance of hand-washing, encouraging mothers to make sure their children do a thorough job—a key step in helping to stop the spread of acute watery diarrhea that can be fatal if left untreated.

Diarrhea had already taken a toll on a baby named Mohamed when one of SAACID's outreach workers recognized the severity of his condition.

"When he was admitted to the program he was very thin and I thought he would never return to his standard weight because he had stopped eating and drinking," said his mother, Fadumo. But when he began treatment at the SAACID center, all of that changed.

"After he began taking the special biscuits, he almost immediately began to eat and drink water and milk again," Fadumo said. Previously thin and listless, Mohamed began putting on



Halima Hussein is a nurse in one of SAACID's therapeutic feeding centers in Mogadishu. "I think about my family a lot in terms of this work," she said. "I always think if this is my child, if they are like this, what could I do for them?" *Caroline Gluck / Oxfam*

weight and becoming more active. His smile even came back.

It's due to SAACID that that kind of outcome, repeated many times over, is possible in a place as devastated as Somalia.

"When I started two months ago, the children I saw then were badly nourished," said Hussein, the nurse, in late summer. "But you would never know now because they have become beautiful and gained weight. ... and that's thanks to our help."

Oxfam's work in Somalia is just part of its broad emergency response to the drought and food crisis. Oxfam has been working in Kenya and Ethiopia as well, providing a range of support, from clean water and sanitation services to part-time income-earning opportunities. Since July 1, 2011, our programs have benefited more than 2.5 million people.

Do one more thing today: Help save a lifeline to Somalia

A key American bank that was still transmitting vital remittances to families in Somalia stopped the service last month because the risk of violating US counterterrorism financing regulations was too high. The bank was concerned about its liability under the current laws. Advocates want the US government to work with banks on finding a way to ensure the continuation of this essential money-wiring service.

Urge your representatives in Congress to educate themselves about the lifesaving value of the remittances and to push for a solution that won't disrupt or delay their transfer. To find out who serves you in Congress, visit congress.org. And for more information on the issue, read our press release at oxfamamerica.org/somalialifeline.



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