

Empowering women in rural Kenya

Welcome Note

Welcome to the first edition of *Action Newsletter*.

This is a bi-annual publication for Action Against Hunger (ACF) Kenya Mission. In this publication, we highlight the most recent information on current programmes implemented by ACF in Kenya.

Our aim is to reach out to various stakeholders and partners to increase awareness about our programmes. This edition covers a unique initiative, the **Mother to Mother Support Group**, that is transforming lives of hundreds of families, especially mothers and children in rural areas.

To share your views/comments, please write to: advocacy.ke@acf-international.org

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A Mother to Mother Support Group in West Pokot County, during an outreach session.

Mother to Mother Support Groups

A peer support initiative that targets mothers of child-bearing age has become a new phenomenon in improving maternal infant and young child nutrition in Action Against Hunger (ACF) - Kenya Mission's health sector.

This initiative called Mother to Mother Support Groups (MtMSGs) established by ACF in West Pokot, Isiolo and Garissa counties has transformed lives of thousands of women, infants and children by building capacity, confidence and support towards promotion of optimal maternal, infant and young child nutrition practices.

The mothers, who are from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds learn and embrace best practices, some of which defy long-cherished cultural beliefs.

They meet every two weeks in groups of 15 to 20, to learn about different topics which they in turn pass on to other mothers. Topics include maternal and childcare practices such as adequate nutrition during pregnancy, exclusive breastfeeding, timely complimentary feeding, good hygiene practices and growth monitoring among others.

The mothers' role as providers and recipients of information to offer support at the community level is critical for the success of MtMSGs.

By the end of 2013, 774 MtMSGs had been established in Dadaab refugee camps, 42 in Isiolo and 89 in West Pokot County.

At least
905
functional
MtMSGs
have been
established
during the
programme
period
(January -
December
2013)

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ACF programmes in Kenya



Action Against Hunger implements Nutrition, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH), Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) programmes in four counties: West Pokot, Isiolo, Garissa and Tana River.

In West Pokot, the European Commission - Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection (ECHO) -funded programme '*Capacity Building for Emergency Nutrition Response in Northern Rift Valley*' targets 24,512 beneficiaries.

A UNICEF-funded programme, '*High Impact Nutrition Intervention and strengthening of integrated nutrition surveys and surveillance systems in ASAL areas of Kenya*' implemented in West Pokot and Isiolo counties targets 98,569 beneficiaries.



In Garbatulla, Isiolo County, a USAID/OFDA (Arid and Marginal Lands Recovery consortium) funded programme '*Sustained access to food in vulnerable communities through enhanced resilience to shocks (ARC consortium)*' targets 33,731 beneficiaries.

The '*Drought Emergency - Saving lives and protecting livelihoods in the arid and semi-arid lands of Kenya*' in Garbatulla and Merti Districts in Isiolo County, targets 37,355 people, mainly to protect drought-affected agro-pastoral and pastoral populations' livelihoods assets.

In Garissa County, a UNICEF-funded programme '*Improving health and nutrition status of refugee populations through up-scaling of Mother, Infant and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) intervention and promotion of positive hygiene and sanitation practices in Dadaab camps*' targets 45,188 beneficiaries in the refugee camps.



ACF and Kenya Red Cross Society are jointly implementing a programme funded by ECHO, '*Improving nutritional status of children under 5 years, pregnant and lactating women in Dadaab host community through High Impact Nutrition Interventions (HiNi)*' that targets 21,958 beneficiaries.

And finally in Tana River County, a charity: water funded programme, '*Access to safe water, sanitation and appropriate hygiene practices in arid and semi-arid communities*' targets 18,800 beneficiaries.

Role model in breastfeeding in refugee camp



Halima and her Baby Safwa

By **HUSSEIN IBRAHIM**

Halima Mohammed is a mother of six children, and an active member of a Mother to Mother Support Group (MtMSG) established by Action Against Hunger (ACF) in Kambioos refugee camp, in Dadaab, Garissa County. The camp is the newest among the five camps in Dadaab. Almost all refugees in this particular camp entered Kenya from Somalia during the horn of Africa drought crisis in 2011.

Halima is from Hawraarsame clan in Somalia who culturally practice feeding infants water and sugar solutions immediately after birth and breastfeeding on only one breast. As mandated by her culture, Halima breastfed all her five children on one breast and gave them a sugar solution at birth. She breastfed her babies on the right breast fearing they would develop diarrhoea and die if breastfed on the left breast. She further believed that colostrum was spoiled milk, and chose not to feed any of her children colostrum, the first three days after birth.

When Halima and her husband Abdirahaman Mohammed arrived in Kambioos refugee camp late 2012, three of their children were immediately admitted to the outpatient therapeutic programme as they were severely malnourished.

Halima was pregnant and anaemic and was therefore admitted to the blanket supplementary feeding programme. In Kambioos, the health and nutrition programmes are run by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), while ACF supports these programmes by implementing Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) programme.

She enrolled in a MtMSG in Section D Block D3 of Kambioos camp to enable her learn more on appropriate infant and young child feeding. In the group, she met other mothers who shared their experiences on breastfeeding.

At nine months, she gave birth to a baby girl, Safwa, and exclusively breastfed her for six months, and on both breasts.

"I no longer spend a lot of money buying medicine to treat sick children," she remarks with satisfaction written on her face.

ACF implements the MIYCN Programme in Dadaab, through funding from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Hussein Ibrahim is Nutrition Officer, ACF Dadaab.

Mothers with a vision in Kapeitum

By **BETTY CHEYECH**

For Mothers in Kosulol sub-location in Pokot South, West Pokot County, life had been all about child bearing and taking care of their husbands.

A new phase in their lives started in November 2012, following a visit to Chepareria Sub-district Hospital by Action Against Hunger (ACF) staff. After attending sensitisation sessions, the women joined a Mother to Mother Support Group (MtMSG), initiated and supported by ACF and the Ministry of Health.

With a total of 25 mothers (5 pregnant and 20 lactating), the Kapeitum MtMSG was formed the same month (November 2012). One year later, it is one of the most active groups among 83 mothers' groups in West Pokot County.

The mothers used to meet once a month at a health center for training facilitated by health workers, before relocating to the village where they now hold meetings once a week in a member's house.

March 2013 was a turning point for Kapeitum mothers as they initiated income generating activities such as poultry keeping and vegetable farming. They planted cabbages in half-acre land and have 300 chicken. In August, the group sold the cabbages and 20 hens which fetched Ksh60,000 and Ksh6,000 respectively.

Of the 300 chicken, 70 lay eggs allowing the group to earn Ksh4,900 a week from sales of these eggs.

With the Ksh60,000 the Kapeitum MtMSG has in their bank account, the mothers are working with the Ministry of Agriculture to build a green house which would enable them to diversify production of tomatoes, capsicum and other horticultural crops.



As well, the group has composed songs advocating for good maternal infant and young child nutrition. During the 2013 World Breastfeeding Week, they presented a song at Chepkopech trading center where the event was held.

A representative of Pokot South District Health Management Team (DHMT) Thomas Chikichik commended the group: "I encourage more mothers to join the Mother to Mother Support Groups and follow the footsteps of Kapeitum group. They will learn more on infant and young child nutrition and become role models in the community."

A husband to a member of the group members, Amos Loyatum said: "When my wife first joined the group, I thought it was a waste of time since she used to attend trainings twice every week. I disputed it bitterly and often quarrelled her whenever she returned home from the meetings. Months later, I noticed a lot of changes in our son who is now 7 months old. We rarely take him to hospital for treatment, except for immunisation.

This is when I learnt the benefits of the mothers' group. I admire their income generating activities. We should also be supported to form fathers' groups that will work hand in hand with mothers."



Photos: Kapeitum MtMSG

Betty Cheyech is Nutrition HiNi Officer, ACF West Pokot.

Mothers' support groups in refugee camps

By **EVANS BETT**

Action Against Hunger (ACF) is implementing Maternal Infant and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) Programme in Dadaab, whose primary goal is to reduce morbidity related to poor feeding and hygiene practices among the refugees populations.

The main activities under the programme are strengthening of MIYCN interventions and promotion of positive hygiene and sanitation practices.

ACF builds the capacity of the implementing partners to promote and support MIYCN structures including the formation of new MtMSGs and enhancement of their sustainability across the refugee camps.

Partners working with ACF in Dadaab are the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Islamic Relief Worldwide Kenya (IRW), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) and Ministry of Health.

The programme is funded by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).



Mother to Mother Support Group meeting in Kambioos refugee camp in Dadaab Sub-county.

Evans Bett is the M&E Manager, ACF Dadaab.

Empowering pastoralist women

By GOLICHA GALGALLO

In the Borana community, women rarely had organised groups or met in groups to discuss issues. This owes to *Gadaa* system that organises Borana men into groups or age sets (about 7-11 men) that assume different responsibilities in the society.

The system has guided religious, social, political and economic life of Boranas for many years. Women were neither allowed to take part in economic activities nor attend *barazas* (meetings), and always took the back seat in development matters in the community.

But times have changed. There is now a group of 15 mothers in Barambate centre, 47km from Garbatulla town in Isiolo County. The group is an initiative of Action Against Hunger that has been engaging mothers to join a Mother to Mother Support Group (MtMSG), where they are trained by community health workers (CHWs) on different health issues including exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, hygiene and sanitation, among others.

Fifteen members of Barambate MtMSG are drawn from the community and were bonded by common factors: being pregnant, lactating or caregivers of children below the age of 5 years. It was like a miracle when they received a grant of Ksh100,000 from ACF's Food Security and Livelihoods project. The mothers, under the leadership of their chairlady Catherine Roba, moved swiftly to develop a business plan, with technical assistance from ACF staff. They were trained by relevant ministries on financial management, conflict resolution, business plan development and liaison issues.

Having acquired the necessary skills, they developed a business plan to start an agrovet shop in Barambate centre. Safia Wario, a member says: "Since we only had one other shop in this area, and our community being pastoralist, we considered this as a profitable business for the group."

The mothers registered their group with the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Development in February 2013 and later on opened a bank account. The agrovet business is now worth Ksh130,000 and each member has made good use of the health knowledge imparted during their meetings. A village elder, Abdullahi lauds the group, "For a long time, we adored *Gadaa* system. But it is now insignificant in the modern world where marginalisation of women is prohibited. Women are accorded equal opportunities to contribute to the community's development. We are grateful to you (ACF) for bringing this programme."

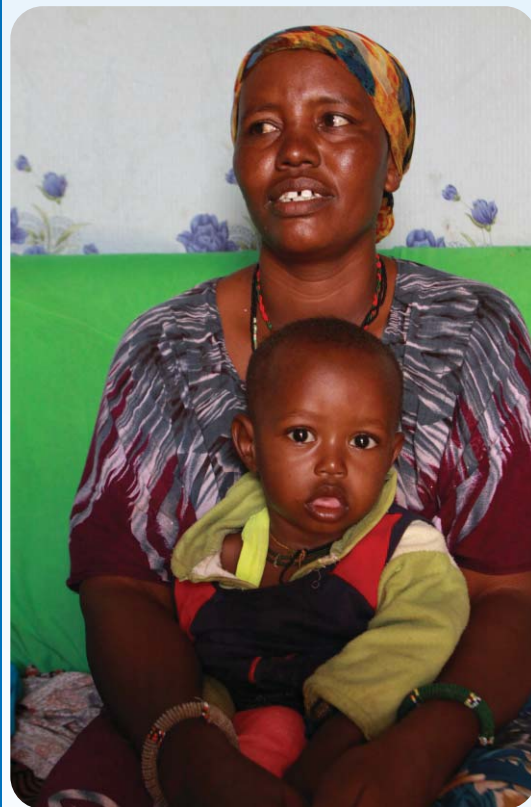


Saphia Wario, a CHW, demonstrates to members of Barambate MtMSG how to use of a dish rack.



Barambate Mother to Mother Support Group.

Exclusive Breastfeeding



Nasibo Salat (*above*) holds her eighth born son, Ismail, 3 months old. "All my children were born at home. When delivering Ismail a nurse from Barambate Dispensary was called to assist me," she said during an interview in her house in Bula Safi Village, in Isiolo County.

Her son looked healthy and enjoyed every bit of her mother's milk. "I was taught how to exclusively breastfeed my child for six months. He hasn't felt sick, not even with diarrhoea or stomach problems," she added with a smile, while throwing a glance at Ismail.



Catherine Roba, the Chairlady of Barambate Mother to Mother Support Group and a Community Health Worker attached to Barambate Dispensary.

Food and nutrition security: Fighting undernutrition through income generating activities

By JOY KIRUNTIMI

Action Against Hunger's (ACF) commitment to tackling acute malnutrition is two-fold: It responds to emergencies and implements long-term programmes that address undernutrition, in order to increase resilience and community's sustainability.

The strategy combines treatment with prevention programmes to address immediate and underlying causes of malnutrition, beyond disease symptoms (such as thinness or appetite loss), thereby providing long-term and lasting results.

In particular, the Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) programme's goal is to enable communities and households to prevent malnutrition through access to nutritious food.

In FSL programme, ACF implements income generating activities (IGAs), which support households in development of small businesses to diversify their income resources and increase their financial independence. With added purchasing power, households are able to diversify their food intake and offer themselves a more balanced nutritional diet.

Mothers Support Group

A case that deserves recognition, not only for its enormous success, but also for its ability to integrate nutrition-sensitive IGAs with ACF's gender-based efforts, is the Mother to Mother Support Group (MtMSG).

Mothers, being caregivers in the family, better understand issues that affect their nutrition status and are agents of improved nutrition in the community.

(Read MtMSG success stories in this newsletter)



Saphia Wario, a CHW in Barambate, teaches mothers how to wash hands using a leaky tin and soap.



Khadija Ibrahim, inside Barambate Mother to Mother Support Group agrovet shop. Right, some members of the group outside the village.



Joy Kiruntimi is the Deputy Country Director, ACF Kenya.

Facelift in Korbessa Health Centre

PETER MWANGI

For a couple of years, Lukas Kaburu, the nurse in charge at Korbessa Health Centre has been attending to delivery of babies in manyattas (traditional huts) among the Borana community in Isiolo County.

Most pregnant mothers attend antenatal clinics in the health facility, but when delivering they opt for traditional birth attendants. Occasionally, a nurse is called to assist when complications occur, mainly due to mismanagement of the labour process. Although Korbessa Health Centre has a maternity ward, a number of challenges such as lack of water and a delivery pack have surfaced forcing the community to abandon the ward altogether.

Every day, a staff member from the facility fetches water from Ewaso Nyiro River, but due to the distance from the health centre to the river, it is difficult to fetch enough water to serve the maternity ward. The water is filtered using *chujio* (ceramic pot filter) or treated with PUR.

After a recent joint support supervision visit, the Community Health Management Team (CHMT) recommended that the health centre be supported to operationalise the maternity ward.

Action Against Hunger (ACF) and other partners worked with the Sub-county Health Management Team to assist the facility. ACF provided mattresses while the Ministry of health supplied beds, beddings and a delivery pack. The community members now work as a team to supply water to the health facility while the Northern Water Service Board is laying water pipes from Merti, about 20km away.

By September 2013, Korbessa Health Centre had undergone a rebirth. Mothers can now deliver babies in the maternity ward and the newborns are placed under the care of qualified health personnel.

Peter Mwangi is HiNi Officer, ACF Isiolo



A refurbished Korbessa maternity ward. Inset: Lukas (left) with the Assistant Nutrition Manager, ACF Merti, Kioko Kiamba.

Ensuring every malnourished child gets treatment

The development of Ready to-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) has revolutionised the treatment of malnutrition over the few years. More children than ever before are able to receive life-saving treatment at home, in the comfort of their own community.

As such, treatment has been made much more accessible, which has had a huge positive impact on the lives of families affected by malnutrition. Action Against Hunger's latest report *Access For All* delves deeper into the concept of community based management of malnutrition, exploring just how far we have come over the years.

However, as I recently discovered when I visited West Pokot in Kenya, there are still a high number of malnourished children who are not yet accessing treatment.

For ACF it is crucial to find out why this is happening and to find solutions that will help more children access the life-saving treatment they need. This can be done through coverage assessments - something which the Coverage Monitoring Network is making much more accessible for humanitarian organisations.

For Nancy (*pictured top right*), who lives in Kosholio village, the main problem she faces is the distance she needs to walk to get to her nearest distribution centre in Chesta each week. Both her 7 month-old twins, Joyline and Belinta are suffering from malnutrition (severe acute malnutrition) and every Thursday she makes her way on a long and bumpy five hour walk to reach the centre, carrying one twin on her front and the other on her back.

Once her twins have been weighed and measured and receive their supplies of Ready to-Use Therapeutic Foods to last the week, she then turns back around and faces her five hour return journey home.

Distance is not the only problem that mothers have when taking their children for treatment. Some mothers struggle to take a full day away from working in their fields, as a day without work usually means a day without food. Other mothers find it difficult to travel along undeveloped roads, which can often be flooded.

Now that the barriers to accessing treatment have been identified in West Pokot, Action Against Hunger will focus on implementing effective solutions. Our aim is to ensure that one day in West Pokot, there truly will be access for all.

(*Read full article:* http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/claire-blackburn/access-for-all_b_3858790.html)



Access to treatment in West Pokot

Mary had to sell a goat to get money for transport to take her two-year old boy, Peter to hospital.

It might not sound like much, but for Mary (*pictured right*) it was one of the toughest decisions she has ever made as it was one of her last goats and her only means of making an income to buy food for her family.

Peter had been very ill for about a month before they arrived at the clinic. The Action Against Hunger (ACF) team found that as well as suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) - he also had malaria and pneumonia. He was a very sick little boy who would likely have died without medical treatment.

Mary and Peter have been at the Sigor hospital in West Pokot, Kenya, for a month now and luckily the little boy is almost fully recovered. Although Mary is very relieved about Peter, She is worried about her other children back home, who she has not been able to see for a month as the hospital is so far away.

She says: "I am here with one sick child but how do I know when I return home there will not be another sick child?"

Mothers like Mary in West Pokot face many barriers to getting the treatment their children need for malnutrition. For Mary, transport costs long distances to walk to the health centre and leaving her other children behind at home are all major challenges.

For other mothers staying at the hospital with their child for a month could mean no one is at home to look after the family's crop fields.

For ACF it is crucial to understand why some malnourished children do not access the treatment they need. Only by understanding the problems families are facing can we then start to create solutions.

Our new report *Access For All* shows how far we have come in the treatment of malnutrition, moving away from treating children in hospital for long periods of time, to treating them at home in the comfort of their community.

(*Read full article:* http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/claire-blackburn/access-for-all_b_3858790.html)



News Pictorial



Nutrition and livelihoods messages on a wall in Duse livestock market, Garbatulla.



A demonstration farm nursery in Kina, Isiolo County.



ACF vehicle crosses a flooded river, on the way to a Mother to Mother Support Group's session in Cheptul village, Pokot Central Sub-county.



Pauline Muket reads a maternal infant and young child nutrition flyer in Atulia, West Pokot.



Joyce Tukei, the only nurse serving Arpollo Dispensary in West Pokot County. Since 2004, the first delivery of a baby in the facility was in her hands in September 2013. She has since assisted 9 deliveries. Even while on her annual leave, Joyce remains in her house within the dispensary so as to respond to any emergencies. However, whenever a patient dies in the facility, she notes: "Some people fear to bring patients and pregnant mothers to deliver babies in my hands, saying I should be cleansed first." Together with community health workers, the nurse and CHWs were optimistic that by the end of 2013, the facility would have recorded 50 deliveries.



ACF's Jane Molo sensitises a Mother to Mother Support Group in Atulia, West Pokot.



A mentally challenged, disabled and epileptic young girl Habiba Mohamed (left) with her mother Dahira Abdi in Barambate Isiolo. Her health condition is considered a curse in the community. She had been abandoned to die in a manyatta (hut). ACF gave unconditional cash grant to assist the girl, through the Food Security and Livelihoods Programme. More is still needed, as her mother is helpless and spends all her time caring for Habiba and five other children.

News Briefs

SUN Civil Society

Action Against Hunger Kenya Mission played a major role in the establishment of Kenya's SUN Movement Civil Society Alliance (CSA). The Mission was elected the Focal Point and World Vision Kenya the Host of the Alliance, for an interim period of six months.

Plans are underway to launch the SUN CSA early 2014.

Advocacy Training

Kenya hosted ACF International Advocacy Workshop in Nairobi from 20 - 22 November 2013. Thirteen participants from Ethiopia, Kenya, India, Uganda, Bangladesh, Nepal, ACF Regional Training Centre, Tchad, Afghanistan and Indonesia.

NCA Report

Field data collection for the Nutrition Causal Analysis (NCA) in Isiolo County has been completed and stakeholders will soon discuss the findings.

NTF Learning Forum

A Nutrition Technical Forum (NTF) Learning Forum was held in Nairobi from 19-20 November 2013. ACF Kenya Mission received a certificate from the Forum, for dedicated leadership in NTF Emergency Nutrition Working Group.

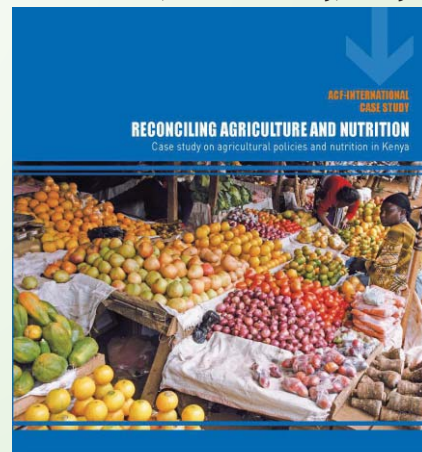


Chepsokang Lonyang of Atulia Mother to Mother Support Group sets her 'table' rich with balanced diet consisting of locally produced foods, which the mothers cooked during a cooking demonstration at an outreach site supported by ACF Kenya, in West Pokot County.

ACF Surveys and Case Studies

In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and partners, in 2013 ACF Kenya Mission has produced a number of survey reports and case studies:

- ♦ *Integrated Survey Garbatulla District, Isiolo County, Kenya, May 2013.* Funded by UNICEF.
- ♦ *Integrated Small Scale Survey Report, West Pokot County, Kenya, June 2013.* Funded by UNICEF and ECHO.
- ♦ *Integrated Survey Merti District, Isiolo County, May 2013.* Funded by UNICEF.
- ♦ *Integrated Survey West Pokot County March 2013.* Funded By UNICEF and ECHO.
- ♦ *Coverage Assessment SQUEAC, Garbatulla District, Isiolo County, Kenya, March 2013.* Funded UNICEF.
- ♦ *Integrated Survey Meru North District, July 2013.* Funded by UNICEF.
- ♦ *Integrated Health & Nutrition SMART Survey Report, Garissa County, April 2013.* Funded by UNICEF & ECHO.
- ♦ *Coverage Assessment SLEAC, West Pokot County Kenya, July 2013.* Funded by UNICEF and ECHO.
- ♦ *Communication for Development (C4D) Formative Research, June 2013.* Funded by UNICEF.



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