

NIAMEY, NIGER, 28 December 2010 - Despite a good harvest and pastoral season in late 2010, the nutritional situation of children remains alarming in Niger where more than 15 children in 100 suffer from acute malnutrition, according to the results of the National Nutrition Survey made public on 16 December. The Niger government, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) called on the international community to intensify its efforts and mobilize all means necessary to fight against child malnutrition and its structural causes to sustainably meet the needs of the most vulnerable children.

The prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) among children under five years of age in Niger decreased from 16.7 per cent to 15.5 per cent between June and November 2010, but it remains above the emergency threshold of 15 per cent - and this for five of the country's eight regions.

The situation remains worrisome for children aged six to 23 months. More than a quarter of them are affected by this form of malnutrition.

And severe acute malnutrition (SAM), which dramatically increases the risk of death for the under-five age group, has impacted 7 per cent of children in the under-two year age category, and is present in 3.2 per cent among the under-five group, according to the findings of this new survey.

These figures reveal not only the severity of the food and nutrition crisis experienced by Niger in 2010, but also the speed and quality of the response implemented by the government and its partners. Between 1 January and 5 December 2010, 313,000 children under five suffering from SAM received care through public health facilities supported by UNICEF and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Some 38,000 children were hospitalized and 275,000 received outpatient treatment. These numbers represent one-fifth of all children treated for SAM worldwide.

In addition, the government, WFP, UNICEF and NGOs helped 686,000 children under two to receive adapted food rations between July and December 2010 as part of Blanket Feeding operations to prevent malnutrition among children living in 38 food-insecure districts -Niger is made up of 42 districts.

"The magnitude of resources used and efforts made by all humanitarian actors and donors have saved the lives of tens of thousands of children," said Guido Cornale, UNICEF Representative in Niger. "This mobilization has stabilized the nutritional status of children, but this is far from enough."

"Each week, thousands of sick children continue coming to health centres, demonstrating once again that we must resolutely confront the underlying causes of malnutrition in Niger."

According to the government of Niger and its UN and NGOs partners, a consolidation of resources and measures for preventing and treating child malnutrition is crucial at this point. Structural policies in the areas of health, education, social welfare, agriculture, and food security must be applied quickly to avoid the disastrous consequences of climatic shocks on people in the Sahel, who are highly vulnerable to crises and epidemics.

According to Richard Verbeeck, WFP Representative in Niger, the results of this survey show that the response has been appropriate. "Without the concerted actions of the humanitarian community and the government of Niger, malnutrition rates would have been disastrous," he said. "The battle against malnutrition is far from over and we must continue our efforts for a permanent and lasting solution to this problem," Mr. Verbeeck concluded.

Source: [UNICEF](#)