



## GLOBAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIPS

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS OF HUMANITARIAN AID AND HEALTH CARE

# GHP ALERT: Hunger and Child Malnutrition in Kenya

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A two year drought in eastern Kenya has worsened the already tenuous food security situation, resulting in an increase in hunger. A GHP survey of the villages in March 2009 showed a worsening of the childhood malnutrition problem. Since then the “long rains” of March-May failed completely. This prolonged drought is causing a critical shortage of food and water in this poverty-stricken area of Africa. Child health and survival is a high priority for GHP. Malnutrition is a major underlying cause of the large number of children who die before reaching 5 years of age. The hunger and malnutrition needs to be addressed urgently, and in the long term projects are needed to increase food security.

### The treatment of severe childhood malnutrition

An urgent priority is to identify and treat those children who already suffer from severe malnutrition. An effective proven treatment is a [ready-to-use food](#) (a brand is called [Plumpy’Nut](#)). GHP has started a therapeutic nutrition program using Plumpy’Nut for the children in the Kisesini Community Health



*A health worker with Naomi, who suffers from severe malnutrition*



Nurse Nicholas giving Plumpy’Nut to a child with severe malnutrition

Project in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. Families with children who have less severe malnutrition receive a fortified corn-soy flour as supplementary food. The local village community health workers (CHWs) help to find the most severely affected children, generally the poorest families of the villages, and assist the Kenyan nurses in the distribution of the food supplements and monitoring of the weight and progress of the children.

## Alleviating hunger and preventing severe malnutrition

The hunger of this drought-stricken region of Kenya affects adults as well as children, and all need and deserve to benefit from a relief effort to alleviate their suffering. However, young children are an important priority because they are growing and developing rapidly during their first two years of life. Lack of adequate nutrition during that critical period of time can result in permanent and devastating harm to their growth and development. Malnutrition also affects a child's ability to fight off infection, and is the underlying cause of over half of the 10 million children who die before reaching 5 years of age in developing countries like Kenya. In addition to the treatment of severe malnutrition with therapeutic feeding, GHP is planning a relief effort for as many villages as possible that will emphasize the prevention of childhood malnutrition. This project will include education about hygiene and sanitation and appropriate feeding of young children (breast feeding and weaning foods), as well as providing food supplements for the children and their families. GHP is providing weighing scales so that the



CHW weighing Sammy, a boy with malnutrition in the village of Ndiuni

community health workers can monitor child growth in the villages and assess the progress of this malnutrition prevention project.

The plan is to distribute food relief to families in about 10 villages with active CHWs willing and able to organize the effort at the village level (there are 75 villages in our Kisesini Community Health Project, so we can expand if funds allow). Every household in all 10 villages will be visited by the CHW and a nurse to weigh and measure the children who are less than 2 years of age, and distribute a food ration for the child and a ration for the family. The food rations will consist of local and acceptable foods high in nutritive value. The children who are found to have severe malnutrition will be entered into a therapeutic feeding program that uses PlumpyNut and fortified corn-soy flour.

We are raising funds primarily for the purchase of the food rations.

A donation of \$25 will feed a hungry child for one month.

Visit us on line: <http://www.ghp-usa.org/>

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