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**Case Study /  
#SahelNOW – Sound The Alarm,  
One million Children at Risk**

UNICEF Headquarters  
Division of Communication, Social and Civic Media Section  
February 2012

## The Challenge

It only rains once a year in the Sahel. This time of year is known as the “lean season,” when food is even more scarce than usual. A drought has left one million children aged below five in danger of severe malnutrition in this region of Africa. This looming crisis is affecting an estimated 10 million people in Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, northern Nigeria, northern Cameroon and parts of the north in Senegal.

With media apathy and donor fatigue, UNICEF’s challenge was to not only get people talking about Sahel, but also drive donations where they are most needed. During the 2012 Annual National Committees meeting in Prague, colleagues from Natcoms, Country Offices and Headquarters (DOC and PFP) came together to discuss how to take decisive, strategic action to get the Sahel crisis into the news agenda and sound the alarm on the crisis. It was agreed that a targeted integrated social media campaign was the best approach. There was little time left to prevent one million children from dying.



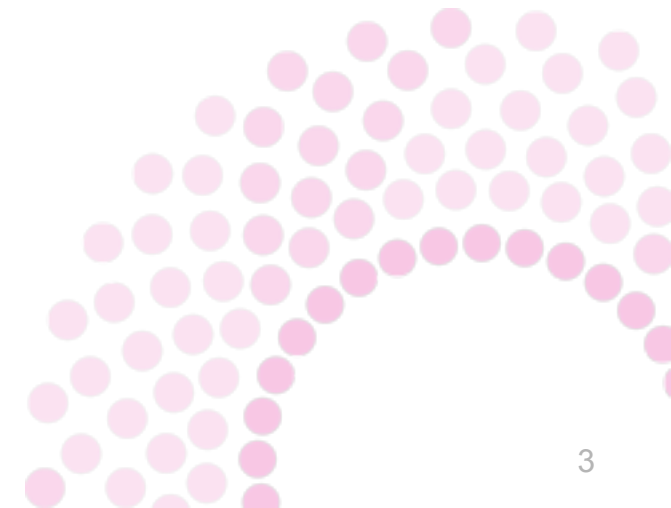


## The Approach

### Creating “Brilliant Basics”

To elevate the underreported issue of one million children of being at risk of dying as a result of the Sahel nutrition crisis, UNICEF launched #SahelNOW in February 2012. In a joint effort involving country offices, Natcoms, PFP, DOC and external creative partners, the campaign’s main goal focused on raising funds and awareness about the crisis. To launch the campaign, a social media package was rolled out coinciding with Anthony Lake’s visit to Chad. The package, available in English, French and Spanish, included 7 days’ worth of ready-made messages for Facebook and Twitter, as well as compelling videos, photos, and visuals for Facebook Timeline cover and Twitter background.

The package was sent to Country Offices and Natcoms so that all offices participating in the campaign could roll out consistent and timely messaging in order to create momentum for the Sahel crisis. The crux of the campaign was the creation of the #SahelNOW hashtag to highlight the sense of urgency. It was recommended that all collaborators use this hashtag in their tweets, along with #Sahel and the eight affected country names (#Chad, #Niger, etc.). Using the same hashtags helped us to monitor the impact of our messages and outreach of the campaign. A SahelNOW list was created on UNICEF’s global Twitter account. This list helped Natcoms and Country Offices to follow key influential UN partners and civil society as well as journalists on the ground.

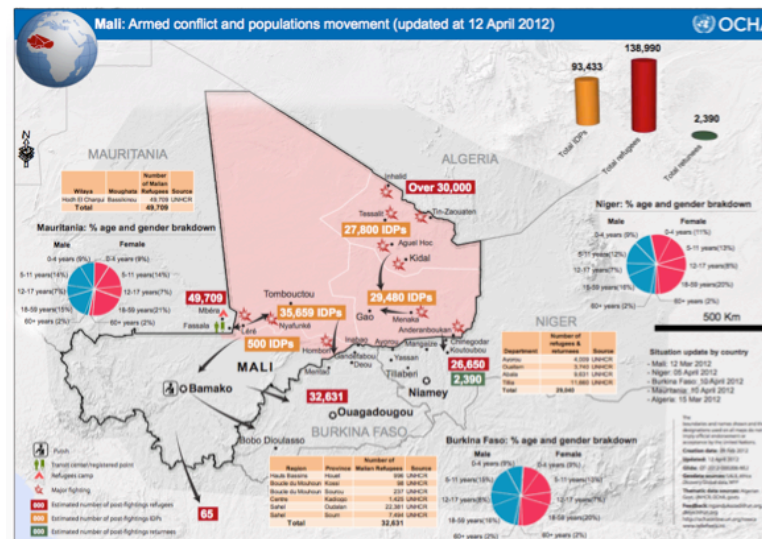
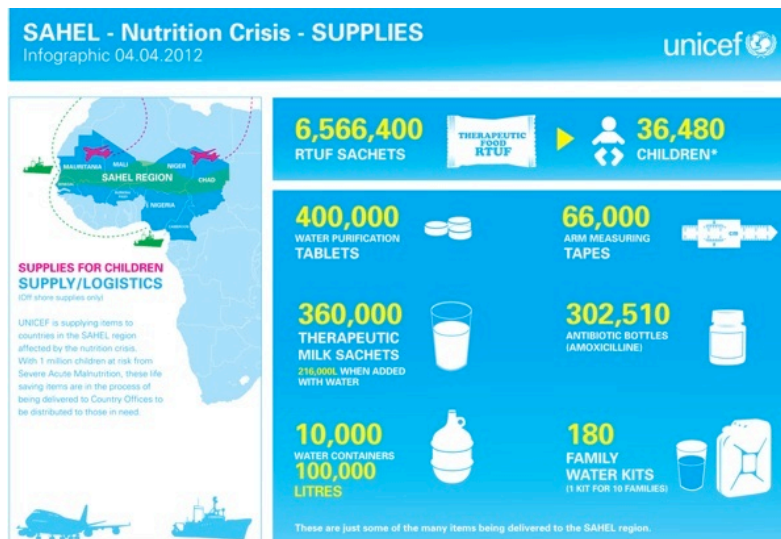


## The Approach

There were other elements of the campaign that were rolled out simultaneously. A **web-based timeline (Tiki-Toki)** was launched to showcase all articles, videos, tweets and stories being shared as part of the SahelNOW initiative.

### Continuing the Momentum

In order to keep the buzz alive, we continued to create **social media materials** (a call-to action animation, stimulating infographics, #SahelNOW T-Shirts) and identify relevant content from partners. We produced "Memories of Sahel, a video series on Sahel immigrants living in New York, sharing their stories and talking about the hardships their families are currently facing.

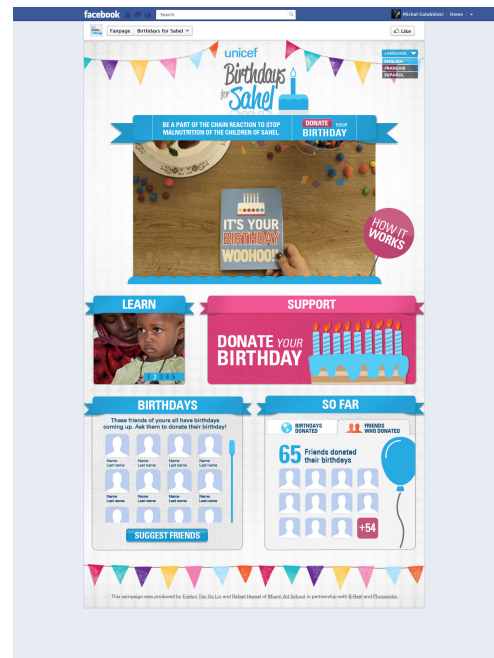


## The Approach

To host our content around the crisis, we made the [www.sahelnow.org](http://www.sahelnow.org) blog. **Four additional social media packages**, aligned with PFP's key messaging framework, were prepared and pushed out each subsequent week to maintain the buzz that we have created so successfully around #SahelNOW.

We developed **Two Facebook applications**:

- **The #SahelNOW Challenge**, a fun game inviting people to test their geographical knowledge on the Sahel while raising awareness about the ongoing crisis.
- **Wishes for Sahel (coming soon)**, an interactive way to inform users on the critical situation, while enticing them to donate their birthday to the children from Sahel.





## The Results

### Impact

Numbers from previous campaigns proved that Twitter is a great tool to mobilize followers in a relative short period of time. The design of the campaign was consequently **optimized for Twitter**. The following data was recorded between 29 March 2012 and 03 May 2012 using Radian6 and TweetReach. From the day of **#SahelNOW campaign** launch, the hashtag dominated the online conversations about the Sahel nutrition crisis. During the time period, the #SahelNOW hashtag was tweeted 95k times and 79k times retweeted by 46k contributors. Summing up the total numbers of all users that could have been exposed to the hashtag through Twitter, the hashtag received 446k impressions.



***It costs around \$100 to save a child from chronic #malnutrition. Want to learn about ways to help? Supportunicef.org/sahel #SahelNOW***

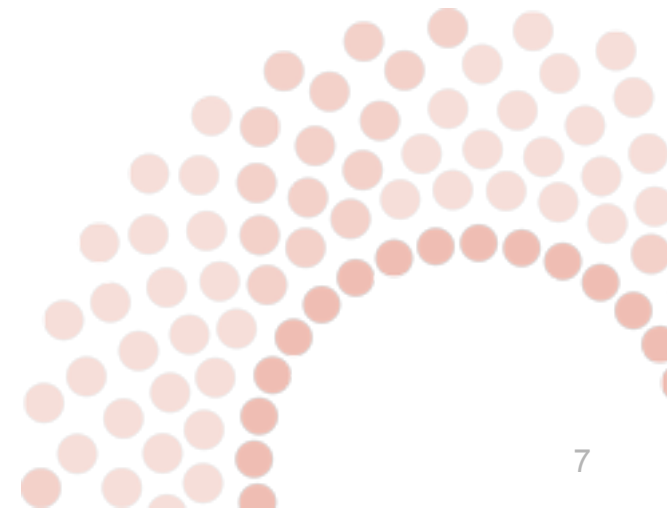
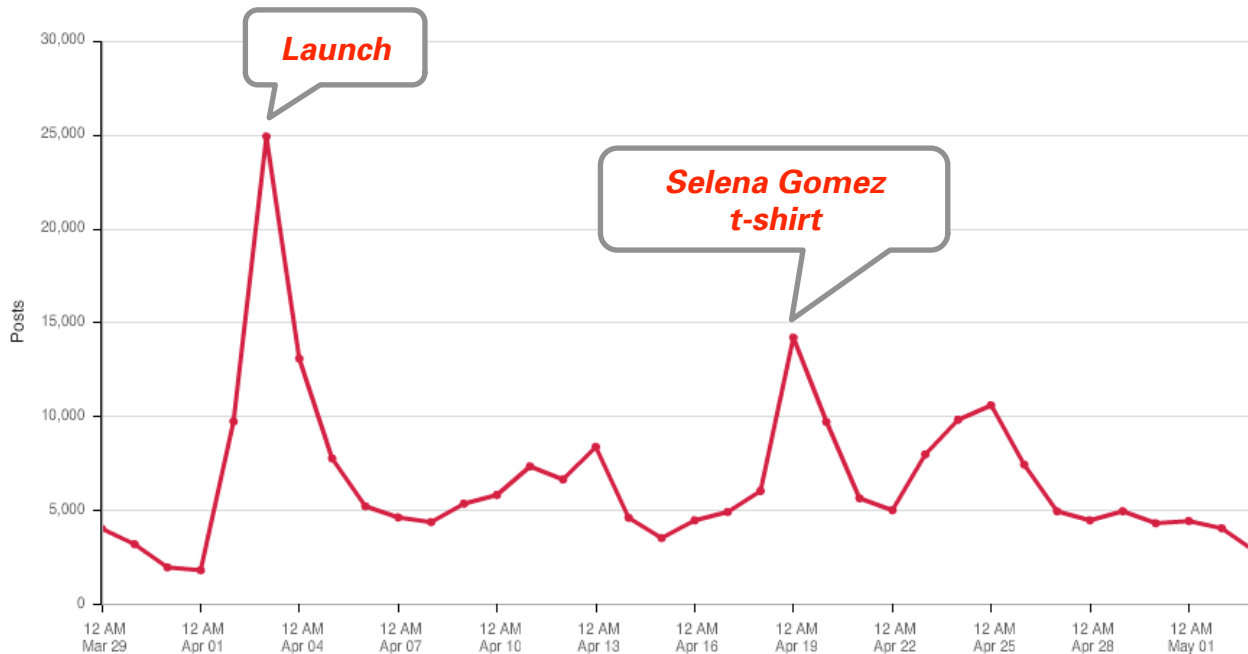
Shakira, via Facebook

## The Results

### Reach

The biggest communication moment was on 03 April 2012 marking the united push of UNICEF Natcoms, Country and Regional Offices and Headquarters. Nearly 10% of all mentions occurred on that day. However, while most campaigns faded out after 2-3 days, the campaign was able to sustain the momentum throughout the month.

Another peak-moment was recorded on 19 April 2012 due to a picture posted by Selena Gomez with a call to action. Selena Gomez asked her fanbase to get creative and post pictures of online actions. Even around those key-moments, the buzz around #SahelNOW was continuous.





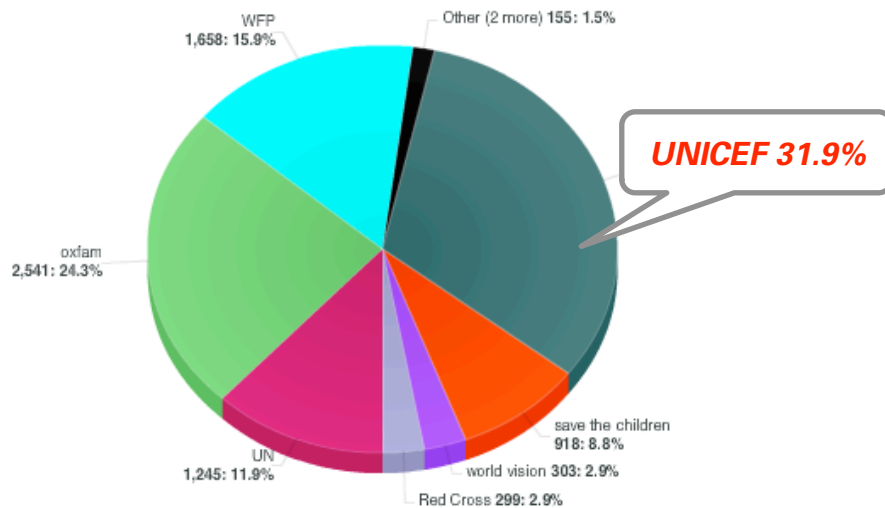
## The Results

### Share of Voice

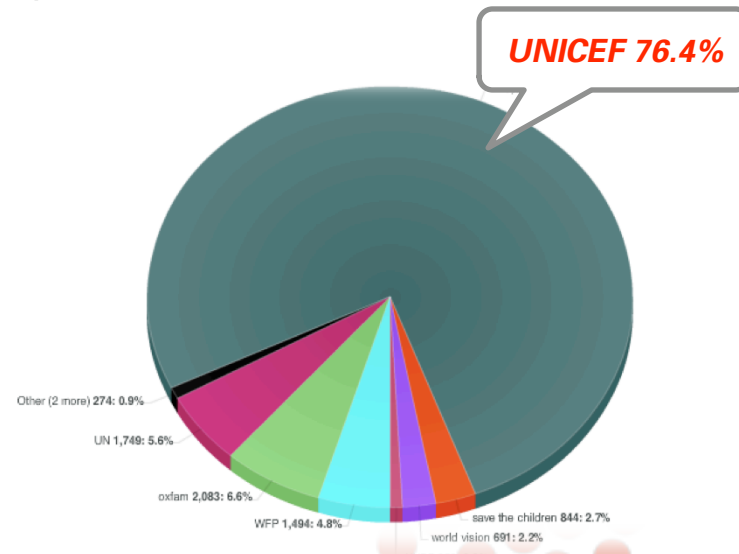
The **#SahelNOW hashtag** was picked up by a large group of peer organizations, such as WFP, Oxfam, UNDP and others, and quickly became **the most used hashtag related to the Sahel crisis**. Below, the share of voice around the Sahel Crisis is illustrated for March 2012 (left) and April 2012 (right). Due to the #SahelNOW campaign, UNICEF was able to gain more than double of the share of voice (from 31.9 % to 76.4 %) in the Sahel discussion during one month.

What is Share of Voice? Share of Voice is a common metric in social media monitoring. It measures how often UNICEF is mentioned in relation to a group of “competitors”.

### March 2012



### April 2012





## The Results

### Demographics

The #SahelNOW campaign was truly global. The data analysis shows that #SahelNOW was mentioned in total **185 countries / regions**. Below, the top countries are categorized by broader regions. In Europe, the UK, Spanish and Dutch Natcoms had the biggest Share of Conversation. In Asia and Oceania, Indonesia, Japan and Australia are the top three countries.

More than 50% of the total mentions came from the United States, followed by Brazil and Canada in the Americas. In Africa, Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya were the top three contributors to #SahelNOW. The campaign was also well received in Arab countries, namely Bahrain, Iraq and Morocco as the top three contributors.

<i>Europe</i>	<i>Mentions</i>	<i>Asia</i>	<i>Mentions</i>	<i>Americas</i>	<i>Mentions</i>	<i>Africa</i>	<i>Mentions</i>	<i>Arab Countries</i>	<i>Mentions</i>
United Kingdom	10255	Indonesia	4357	United States	120487	Nigeria	771	Bahrain	1555
Spain	9717	Japan	2437	Brazil	6651	South Africa	595	Iraq	1146
Netherlands	6072	Australia	1865	Canada	3436	Kenya	285	Morocco	956
Italy	4814	India	1331	Venezuela	3431	Ghana	223	Saudi Arabia	943
France	3865	Thailand	895	Mexico	3286	Mozambique	98	Egypt	641
Greece	2313	Turkey	875	Argentina	3060	Uganda	84	United Arab Emirates	592

## The Results

### Big thanks to our celebrities

Celebrities played a huge role in spreading the word around the crisis. Goodwill Ambassadors, **Shakira and Mia Farrow** and UNICEF Ambassador **Selena Gomez** provided support from the beginning, and several actors, musicians, models, athletes and artists, from all over the world, joined in spontaneously, highlighting the viral nature of the campaign. **@SelenaGomez** drove most conversations and consistently used the #SahelNOW hashtag in her tweets. The support of the Goodwill Ambassadors also triggered active conversations on Facebook. For example, soccer star **Leo Messi** posted about the Sahel Crisis and triggered **more than 30k likes, 3k comments and nearly 2k shares.**

"  
**#SahelNOW needs our help. Sahel is in a food crisis. Visit [unicefusa.org](http://unicefusa.org) to learn more. Let's make #SahelNOW a trending topic**  
 "

Selena Gomez, via Twitter



**Selena Gomez**  
 @selenagomez



My fave new shirt. Follow [@UNICEFUSA](https://twitter.com/UNICEFUSA) and tweet a pic to them w/ [#SahelNOW](https://twitter.com/hashtag/SahelNOW) in it. We'll make 1 my icon for a day.  
[pic.twitter.com/UihhyDC4](https://pic.twitter.com/UihhyDC4)





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## Creative Partners

These creative partners triggered actions in more than 100 countries. For example, the day of the launch of the Klout partnership, we received 3 times more Facebook page “Likes” than average.



MIAMI AD SCHOOL



Sign up for Klout! [Sign in with Twitter](#) OR [Connect with Facebook](#)

**KLOUT FOR GOOD**



**unicef**

At least one million young children are at risk of dying of severe malnutrition in the Sahel region of Africa. Right now, many are already facing disease and stunted growth. Without your help, these children might not see past the age of 5. UNICEF needs your help to spread the word on your networks about the Sahel crisis in Africa.

**DONATE YOUR INFLUENCE!**

[Tweet](#) [Invite](#)

**A Time Bomb is Ticking in the Sahel**

Communities in the Sahel lack capacity for resilience. [Watch](#)

**THE SAHEL REGION**



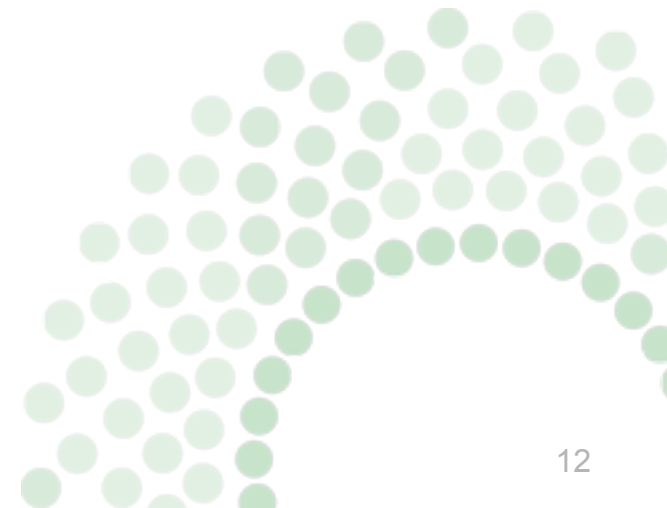
This creative video by Miami Ad School students Michael Doolley and Ian Goings break down the effects of malnutrition on children in the Sahel region of Africa and explains the challenges that children under the age of 5 are facing. Please watch and share this video!

Some 15 million people are threatened by a nutritional crisis in the Sahel region of Africa. A drought has sucked the land dry and food prices are rapidly becoming too expensive for families to afford. Stay informed and learn more at [sahelnow.org](http://sahelnow.org)



## Relevant Links

Check out the materials we designed and our latest updates on the situation in the Sahel at:  
[www.sahelnow.org](http://www.sahelnow.org) and <http://uni.cf/H3dmof>





## Who we are

The Social and Civic Media Section, in the Division of Communication, seeks to support and promote UNICEF's mandate through the use of social and civic media, engaging stakeholders in a deeper dialogue about child rights issues and empowering youth and vulnerable communities to create positive change worldwide.

## Want to learn more about #SahelNOW?

For further information contact us at:  
[socialandcivicmedia@unicef.org](mailto:socialandcivicmedia@unicef.org)