

For Immediate Release

Wednesday, July 20, 2011

United Church Launches Emergency Appeal for Horn of Africa

Toronto: The United Church of Canada announced today that it is launching an emergency appeal in response to the famine and drought crisis in East Africa. In addition to calling for donations from its own members, the church is welcoming contributions from the general public. As an immediate response, the church has already committed \$50,000 from its emergency response fund to the humanitarian relief work of its partners in the region.

Those partners, including [ACT Alliance](#), the National Council of Churches in Kenya, and the Organization of African Instituted Churches, report that this is the worst drought to hit the region in 60 years.

One ACT news story notes that the mix of drought, skyrocketing food prices, food shortages, deaths of livestock in large numbers and conflict in Somalia has led to a massive increase in the number of new arrivals each day in Dadaab refugee camp on the Kenya–Somalia border.

The camp receives about 1,300 people daily, mostly women with children and elderly people. The noticeable influx of people fleeing the drought began at the end of May, swelling an already overcrowded camp that is now home to nearly 400,000.

ACT's Lennart Hernander, in Nairobi, says people are arriving at Dadaab noticeably malnourished and that between 20 and 30 children die of malnutrition in the camp each month. "In June, it was obvious just by passing through the graveyard that there were new children's graves."

In another website posting, ACT reports that "piles of grey ash—the burnt remains of cow carcasses—lie around villages in Borena, south Ethiopia." Rikke Holm, a Horn of Africa representative of ACT Alliance member DanChurchAid, reports by text message, "The old men tell us that they collect the dead animals near the village and burn them to avoid diseases. One of the old men adds ironically 'In a month or so you can collect us.'"

In the two worst-affected countries, Kenya and Ethiopia, ACT is distributing food and supplementary feeding for children, the elderly and nursing mothers; improving existing water supplies; and trucking in water to some areas. In the longer term, ACT will be looking to rehabilitate pastures, ponds, and water points; restock goat and sheep herds; and grow animal feed.

But that will happen only when the current hunger crisis is over. For now ACT's priorities are to meet people's urgent need for food, clean water, shelter and medicine and to join forces with other aid agencies, UN bodies, and governments to reach as many as possible of the 10 million people who risk starving to death.

To donate online, please visit The United Church of Canada's website, www.united-church.ca.

See also the Emergency Appeal video we have just posted on The United Church of Canada's YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/unitedchurchofcanada.

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