

## Drought in the Horn of Africa: Fast Facts

You've seen the news reports, but may not understand what's happening and why. Here's a primer on the emergency that's devastating an entire region of Africa.

### **Q: What's happening?**

A: The United Nations says the Horn of Africa is experiencing the worst food crisis in the world today, with over 10 million people severely affected in drought-stricken areas of Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Uganda. In Somalia alone, one in every three people is in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

### **Q: How widespread is the problem?**

A: Drought has ravaged virtually all of Somalia and large parts of northern Kenya and Uganda and southern Ethiopia. Many areas have experienced less rain in 2010 and 2011 than any period on record in the past 60 years.

### **Q: Why has the drought become an emergency?**

A: With water in short supply, failed harvests have caused food shortages. Livestock are dying from a lack of grazing land and water. Price inflation of more than 20 percent across much of east Africa has put what food there is out of reach of the poor.

To make matters worse, Somalia has been wracked by conflict for years, causing death and displacement and limiting humanitarian access, especially with political complications in the south.

### **Q: What's happening to the people?**

A: For many families, assets, capital, savings and income are tied up in one source: their livestock. The drought is forcing thousands of people who raise livestock to travel far from their homes to find food and water for their animals. In the case of Somalis, tens of thousands have had to leave their homes and trek to camps across the Kenyan and Ethiopian borders in search of food.

### **Q: How are the children affected?**

A: Aid workers report widespread cases of dehydration, malnutrition and illness. Children are at greatest risk, especially those under the age of five.

Aid workers report children begging for water by roadsides. Many children have died on the long trek in search of food and water. Many of those who survive arrive at refugee camps seriously malnourished. With animals and people sharing rapidly depleting water sources, the risk of disease increases drastically.

World Vision is also extremely concerned about the danger to children when large groups of people travel long distances. The potential to become separated from parents is high and unaccompanied children are vulnerable to neglect, abuse and exploitation.

**Q: What is World Vision doing to help?**

A: World Vision is working with governments and aid agencies to provide clean water, food and sanitation facilities. We're also providing food and veterinary care to livestock, as these animals are the livelihood for many families. And we're working to fight the effects of drought by improvement of water reservoirs.

**Q: How long will the drought persist?**

A: Estimates are that the drought situation in Horn of Africa may persist until February 2012. Rising global food prices are also threatening to make the situation worse as the cost of food in affected areas has been rising in recent months.