



NEWS RELEASE

NORTHERN SOMALIA FEELING EFFECTS OF FAMINE, SAYS WORLD VISION

Internal migration puts pressure on communities already struggling to cope

GAROWE, SOMALIA (July 29, 2011) – The situation in northern Somalia is increasingly dire as communities face rising levels of acute malnutrition, plus mounting pressure from the inflow of internally displaced people (IDP) escaping famine and conflict in the south, says World Vision.

“We’re seeing an increasing number of people searching for food and water,” says Mike Weickert, World Vision Canada’s Director of Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs, who is currently in the Puntland region of northern Somalia. “Conditions in the north are rapidly deteriorating, forcing families to make desperate decisions.”

More than half the Somali population of 3.7 million require humanitarian assistance, an increase of 35 per cent from 2.4 million at the beginning of the year.

Host communities are increasingly anxious as more people arrive in Puntland daily, seeking shelter, food, water and safety. This region has endured seven consecutive years of poor rainfall. Water catchments have dried up, forcing people and animals to share limited water supplies, a risky coping mechanism which causes waterborne disease, particularly in young children and the elderly.

According to the World Health Organization, acute malnutrition rates across southern Somalia range between 20 to 30 per cent. Among Somali refugees who have arrived in Ethiopia, the rates are between 45 to 47 per cent.

World Vision response

World Vision has been working with communities in Somalia since 1992, and began programs in Puntland in October 2010. The agency is currently reaching out to 46,000 people in Puntland and Somaliland, addressing the challenges of both local communities and the growing IDP populations. This support includes providing specialized emergency nutrition programs, clean water, and food-for-work activities.

A key World Vision project, in partnership with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), is providing emergency water, sanitation and health care, including the treatment of severe acute malnutrition in children.

How Canadians can help

Canadians can contribute to World Vision Canada’s Horn of Africa relief effort by visiting worldvision.ca or calling 1-800-268-5528.

Note to media: Mike Weickert is available for interviews (telephone or Skype) from Garowe in the Puntland region of northern Somalia until Sunday, July 31. To arrange an interview, please contact one of World Vision’s media staff listed below. Note that Somalia is seven hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Savings Time.

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