

NEWS RELEASE



END OF FAMINE IN SOMALIA MEANS MORE WORK AHEAD

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. (February 3, 2012) – While the decision by the United Nations (UN) to declare an end to the famine in parts of Somalia is good news, World Vision’s Director of Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs (HEA) for East Africa says the humanitarian crisis caused by the drought and ongoing military conflict in the region is far from over.

“World Vision is pleased to note that some harvests and an increase in international aid have led to an improvement in conditions in Somalia,” says Stuart Katwikirize, HEA Director for World Vision (East Africa). “But there are still approximately two million people facing serious food shortages in the country and they will continue to need support for the foreseeable future.”

The UN announced Friday that it has lifted the famine designation that had applied to six regions of Somalia and was first implemented in July 2011. Heavy rains that began last fall led to one of the best harvests in more than 17 years and a surge in international aid increased the availability of food, which helped to lower prices. However, the UN has warned that these gains are “fragile” and that famine conditions could return if the traditional August rains are less than expected and if political turmoil in Somalia continues to disrupt aid shipments.

“World Vision is providing humanitarian relief in the Somali regions of Puntland and Somaliland and we continue to see refugees arriving daily from southern Somalia,” Katwikirize says. “Although famine conditions have eased, we will continue to provide day-to-day support, and also implement our long-term health and development programs to help improve the capacity of local communities to deal with future droughts and offer better lives for their children.”

World Vision Canada’s HEA Director Mike Weickert agrees and adds: “There are no quick fixes for a crisis like the one that Somalia has endured over the past year. The international community must continue to provide aid over the longer term to help children and their families in areas where access to food and medical care remains uncertain.”

World Vision’s response to the drought in the Horn of Africa began in February 2011. Since that time, more than two million people in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania have benefited from World Vision’s humanitarian aid that has included food and water, health care and nutrition, shelter, support to education in emergencies, humanitarian protection and veterinary help. At the same time, World Vision has continued to implement its long-term development programs in all four countries, aimed at improving the resilience of local people by providing access to more drought resistant crops, better livestock care and to clean, safe water.

“World Vision remains grateful to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who helped us raise more than \$12 million for our appeal for the victims of the drought in the Horn of Africa,” says World Vision Canada President and CEO Dave Toycen. “Our commitment to help the people of the region remains as strong now as it did when we first launched our appeal and I want to assure Canadians that we will be there over the long haul.”

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