

## NEWS RELEASE

### Horn of Africa drought migration may displace 500,000 children, World Vision warns

- *10 million affected by drought in Horn of Africa; children are at risk of starvation*
- *With food scarcity and mass migration, the risk of child labour and child marriage is heightened*
- *Approximately 20 per cent of affected people are in areas where World Vision works; water, food, nutrition and livelihood support with agriculture and livestock healthcare projects being scaled up*
- *Agency appeals for Canadian donations to help children and families through to February 2012 when the crisis is expected to ease*

**MISSISSAUGA, Ont. (July 14, 2011)**—Half a million children affected by the drought in the Horn of Africa may be separated from their families and loved ones, increasing their vulnerability in the midst of the crisis, warns World Vision. This, coupled with the overwhelming need to deliver basic necessities has lead the aid agency to call on Canadians for donations to address what is being described as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.

More than 10 million people are affected by the drought and many of them are on the move to find food and water. In addition to seeing high levels of malnutrition every day, the agency is also concerned about the numbers of separated and unaccompanied children.

"We're seeing children leaving their family homes on their own to look for work and food. They are on foot covering distances as great as the distance between Toronto and Ottawa—trying to survive looking for any food, or work to help them buy food, without any guarantee they'll ever find either," said Carleen McGuinty, World Vision's child protection expert. "Unaccompanied children are more vulnerable to neglect, abuse, exploitation, disease and malnutrition, so we must ensure the focus on them is not lost."

"World Vision is working in the affected areas to ensure people, especially children, are adequately nourished, protected from disease through access to clean water and health care, and communities are able to maintain their livelihoods and earn cash to provide for themselves," says Mike Weickert, director of humanitarian and emergency affairs. "All of this is being done in tandem with government authorities and other aid agencies to meet the most pressing humanitarian needs in the most effective manner."

#### Humanitarian Response

- World Vision has been responding to the crisis in the Horn of Africa since March with additional funding for food aid and nutrition and water programming in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia.
- At food distribution centres, World Vision designates at least one staff member to act as a social worker, identify vulnerable children and to ensure others are not separated from their families. Child-headed households and separated children are issued ration cards in their own names and receive special distributions of food and non-food items.
- World Vision and other organizations are appealing for millions of dollars to help deal with increased levels of severe malnutrition, to work with national governments where appropriate and families on long-term recovery plans.

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